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THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index.

Subscription $6.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $7.00. Single copy $1.75. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XXI available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003. Microfilms of Volumes I—XXI available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Printing office: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23205. Second Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia.

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THE
Hudson Review

VOLUME XXII
NUMBER 4
WINTER 1969-70

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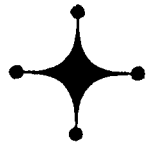

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GUY DAVENPORT

The Aeroplanes at Brescia

KAFKA STOOD ON THE SEAWALL at Riva under the early September sky. But for his high button shoes and flaring coat, his easy stance had an athletic clarity. He walked with the limberness of a racing cyclist. Otto Brod, with whom he had spent the morning discussing moving pictures and strolling along the shore under the voluble pines and yellow villas of the Via Ponale, lit a cigar and suggested a light beer before lunch. A wash of sweet air from the lake rattled a circle of pigeons, who flapped up into a shuttle of gulls. A fisherman in a blue apron reclined on the harbor steps smoking a small pipe. On a staff over a perfectly square building rippled the Austrian flag with its black, two-headed eagle. An old man knotting cords in a net strung between poles watched them with the open concern of the Italians. A soft bell rang in the hills.

"Good idea," said Kafka. "It will get the taste of Dallago out of our mouths." His eyes, when they could be seen under the broad brim of a black fedora, seemed abnormally large. To the natural swarthiness of his square face, rough of bone, Italy had already added, Otto noticed, a rose tint.

The *ora,* the south wind blowing up from Sirmione, had begun to scuff the dark blue of the lake. The old Venetian fort between the Città Riva and the railway station seemed to Kafka to be an intrusion into the Euclidean plainness of the houses of Riva. It reminded him of the *schloss* at Meran that had disturbed him not only for being vacant and blind in its casements but also because of the suspicion that it would inevitably return in his most anxious dreams. Even without his intuition of the mute claim of this empty castle to stay in his mind as a presence neither welcome nor explicable, it was always terrifying to know that there were things in the world empty of all significance that yet persisted, like heavy books of the law which mankind in a stubborn reluctance would not destroy and yet would not obey. The castle at Riva, the *Rocca,* the Rock, was a barracks housing the new conscripts, but the castle at Meran, the Brunnenburg, was a great shell. Suddenly

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he heard a telephone ringing in its high rooms, and made himself think instead of the morning at the Bagni della Madonnina and of Otto's polite but equivocal replies to Dallago the poet who had apologized by rote man's oneness with nature. What a fool, Otto had said later, on their walk.

The cubes of Riva, white and exact, were an architecture, Kafka remarked, the opposite of the lobes and tendrils of Prague. And there was truth in the light of Riva that was, as a poet might say, the opposite of the half-truths of the cut-glass sunlight of Prague, which had no fire in it, no absolute transparency. Instead of tall slabs of squared light in just proportions, Prague had weather of a dark and glittering richness.

Otto replied that the light here was pure and empty, creating a freedom among objects. The very shadows were incised. It is an older world, he added, and yet one to which the new architecture is returning. Concrete is but the Mediterranean mud house again, and glass walls a new yearning to see light sliced as in the openness of the Aegean landscape. The newest style, he said, is always in love with the oldest of which we are aware. The next *Wiedergeburt* will come from the engineers.

Max Brod, whom they had left writing at their *pensione,* was already at the café, and was holding a newspaper above his head for them to see.

"They are going to fly at Brescia!" he shouted, and a waiter who might have been bringing a seltzer to the Tsar of Bulgaria, so grave was his progress, looked with uninterrupted dignity over his shoulder at Max, who to him was but a Czech, and probably a Jew, stamping his feet and rattling *La Sentinella Bresciana* in the air.

"Aeroplanes! Blériot! Cobianchi! *Die Brüder Wright!*"

"Due bionde, piacere," Otto said to the waiter, who was relieved that the Czech's friends did not flap their arms and dance on the terrace.

"Incredible," Otto said. "Absolutely incredible luck."

Kafka laughed outright, for Max was as of the moment as he a brooding postponer, and their friendship had always been a contest between the impulses of Max and the circumspect deliberation of Franz. It was a comedy that popped up everywhere between them. They had been in Riva a day, Max had spent a month convincing Franz that he must come to Riva on his vacation, and

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here was Max dashing them off on the second morning. But, as he quickly said, he could not question the call of the flying machines, which none of them had seen. They were well worth giving up the sweet quiet of Riva.

Otto took the newspaper from Max and laid it out on the table.

"Brescia is just at the other end of the lake," Max explained. "We can take the steamboat to Salò, and get a local from there. It's three days off, but we'll want to be there at least the day before, as Mitteleuropa will have arrived in droves, with their cousins and their aunts. I've even written the Committee there in the second paragraph. Naturally there is a Committee."

"By all means," Franz said, "a Committee." At its head, in gilt chairs, sat Dottore Civetta, Dottore Corvo, and Mangiafoco himself.

"I told them that we are journalists from Prague, and that we require accommodations."

In the last analysis, Kafka sighed, all things are miracles.

There was a steamboat the next morning. They boarded it and marvelled at the antiquity of its machinery and the garishness of its paint.

Only six years ago, Max had told them the evening before at the café under a sky much higher than the skies of Bohemia and with stars twice the size of those of Prague, two Americans had chosen the most plausible combination of elements from a confusion of theories and constructed a machine that flew. The flight lasted twelve seconds only, and scarcely five people were there to see it.

By a fat wheatfield under the largest of skies an intricate geometry of wires and neat oblongs of stretched canvas sat like the death ship of a pharaoh. It looked like a loom mounted on a sled. It was as elegantly laced, strutted and poised as the time machine of H. G. Wells. Its motor popped, its two screw propellers whirred, bending the lush American weeds to the ground. Fieldmice scurried to their burrows in the corn. Coyotes' ears went up and their yellow eyes brightened.

Were they like the Goncourts, inseparable brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright? Or were they like Otto and Max, twins in deference and simple brotherhood but essentially very different men? They were from Ohio, nimble as Indians, but whether Democrats, Socialists, or Republicans Otto could not say.

The editors of the American papers, taken up with duelling

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and oratory, paid no attention at all to their flight. The strange machine flew and flew before any word of it appeared. Icarus and Daedalus had flown above peasants who did not look up from their bowl of lentils and above fishermen who were looking the other way.

The Brothers Wright were a bishop's sons, but, as Otto explained, the sons of an American bishop. His flock was one of dissenters separated from dissenters, a congregation with a white wooden church on a knoll above a brown river, the Susquehanna perhaps. One could not imagine the dreams of Americans.

If one flew over this community in an aeroplane or drifted over it in a balloon, there would be school children below planting a tree. Buffalo and horses grazed in grass so green it was said to be blue. The earth itself was black. The houses, but one story high, were set in flower gardens. One might see the good Bishop Wright reading his Bible at a window, or a senator driving his automobile along a road.

The young Orville and Wilbur had constructed mechanical bats, Otto said, after the designs of Sir George Cayley and Penaud. For America was the land where the learning of Europe was so much speculation to be tested on an anvil. They read Octave Chanute's *Flying Machines;* they built kites. The kite was their beginning, not the bird. That was da Vinci's radical error. The kite had come from China centuries ago. It had passsed through the hands of Benjamin Franklin, who caught electricity for the magician Edison, who, it was said, was soon to visit Prague. Men such as Otto Lilienthal had mounted kites and rode the wind and died like Icarus. The Wrights knew all these things. They read Samuel Pierpont Langley; they studied the photographs of Eadweard Muybridge. That was the way of Americans. They took theories as pelicans swallowed fish, pragmatically, and boldly made realities out of ideas.

But the morning's paper, which had come up to Riva on the steamboat, reported that the Wrights might fly in Berlin rather than at Brescia. It hinted of a rivalry between them and the American Curtiss, whose improvements on the flying machine were in many ways far in advance of theirs.

Villages on the lakeshore were stacked, house above house, as in a canvas of Cézanne, from the waterfront to the hilltops, where the church was the highest of all, ringing its bell. In the old city

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at Prague under the wall he had felt among the alchemists' kitchens and the tiny shops of the smiths in the old ghetto the alien wonderment he felt in Italy, as if an incantation had been recited and the charm had worked. Had not one of the gulls at Riva spoken a line of Latin?

The lake was as vast as the sea.

Otto, who wore a cap and belted jacket, did turns around the richly obstructed deck of the trembling steamboat. Max and Franz sat on a folded travelling rug by the wheelhouse. Otto and Max, it occurred to Kafka, might seem like two princes from an Art Nouveau poster for a Russian opera to those who did not know them. This was illusion, for they were modern men, wholly of the new age. Max was twenty-five, he had his degree, a position, and had published a novel last year, the *Schloss Nornepygge*. Was this why the desolate Castle Brunnenburg in the wild Camonica hills hung in his memory like a ghost?

They seemed not to feel the emptiness of the lake at noon. They had their inwardnesses, how deeply they had never let him see, inviolably private as they were, as all men were.

Otto had been born into the new world, conversant with numbers and their enviable harmonies and with the curiously hollow thought of Ernst Mach and Avenarius, whose minds were like those of the Milesians and Ephesians of antiquity, bright as an ax, elemental as leaves, and as plain as a box. This new thought was naked and innocent; the world would wound it in time. And Max, too, had his visions in this wild innocence. A suburb of Jaffa had just a few months ago been named Tel Aviv, and Zionists were said to be speaking Hebrew there. Max dreamed of a Jewish state, irrigated, green, electrical, wise.

The destiny of our century was born in the lonely monotony of schoolrooms. Italian schoolrooms were doubtless the same as those of Prague and Amsterdam and Ohio. The late afternoon sun fell into them after the pupils had gone home, spinning tops and throwing jacks on the way. A map of Calabria and Sicily hung on a wall, as polychrome as Leoncavallo, as lyric in its citron gaiety as the chart of the elements which hung beside it was abstract and Russian. Sticks of yellow and white chalk lay in their troughs, and the geometry drawn by them was still on the blackboard, evident, tragic, and abandoned. The windows, against which a wasp rose and fell, testing all afternoon the hardness of

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their dusty lucidity, were as desolate and grandly melancholy as barn doors looking on the North Sea in October. Here Otto heard of the valence of carbon, here Max saw bright daggers drawn from a bleeding Caesar, here Franz dreamed of the Great Wall of China.

Did men know anything at all? Man was man's teacher. Anyone could see the circle in that.

Tolstoy was at Yásnaya Polyána, eighty and bearded and in peasant dress, out walking, no doubt, in those thin birch groves under a white sky where the sense of the north is a sharp and distant quiet, an intuition shared with the wolf and the owl of the emptiness of the earth.

Somewhere in the unimaginable vastness of America Mark Twain smoked an Havana cigar and cocked his head at the new automobiles three abreast on roads hacked through red forests of maple. His dog was asleep at his feet. Perhaps William Howard Taft called him on the telephone from time to time to tell a joke.

A sailboat passed, an ancient bearded hunter at its tiller.

Franz Kafka, jackdaw. Despair, like the crane's hunch on Kierkegaard's lilting back, went along on one's voyages. His degree in Jurisprudence was scarcely three years old, he was rapidly, as Herr Canello assured him, becoming an expert in workingmen's compensation insurance, and the literary cafés of Prague to which he did not go were open to him, both the Expressionist and those devoted to the zithers and roses of Rilke.

Had not Uncle Alfred, who had been awarded so many medals, his mother's elder brother Alfred Löwy, risen to be manager general of the Spanish railways? The Spanish railways! And Uncle Joseph was in the Congo, bending over a ledger to be sure, but he could look up and there was the jungle. But then Uncle Rudolf was a book-keeper at a brewery, and Uncle Siegfried a country doctor. And his cousin Bruno was editing Krasnopolski.

There were odysseys in which the Sirens are silent.

Without paper, he conceived stories the intricacy and strangeness of which might have earned a nod of approval from Dickens, the Pentateuch and Tolstoy of England. Before paper, his imagination withdrew like a snail whose horns had been touched. If the inward space of the mind could be externalized and lived in, its aqueducts and Samarkands and oxen within walls which the Ro-

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man legions had never found, he would be a teller of parables, graceless perhaps, especially at first, but he would learn from more experienced parablists and from experience. He would wear a shawl of archaic needlework, would know the law, the real law of unvitiated tradition, and herbs, and the histories of families and their migrations, to which stock of tales he might add his own, if fate hardened his sight. He would tell of mice, like Babrius, and of a man climbing a mountain, like Bunyan. He would tell of the ships of the dead, and of the Chinese, the Jews of the other half of the world, and of their wall.

"What silence!" said Max.

"I was listening to the Sirens," said Franz.

From Salò they went by train, along with many hampers of garlic and a cock that crowed all the way, to Brescia.

The station was very night. Kafka wondered that the people milling outside didn't have lanterns. The train as it slid into Brescia was like a horse dashing through the poultry market in Prague, throwing cage after cage of chickens into a panic as it passed. Every passenger was out of his seat before the train hissed to a halt. An Austrian fell out of a window. A woman asked if anyone saw her brother-in-law outside, a gentleman and courier to the Papal court. A hat passed from hand to hand overhead. People getting off stuck in the doors with people getting on. They promised each other not to get lost, and suddenly they were outside the train. Otto emerged backwards, Kafka sideways, and Max frontwards, with his necktie across his face.

Panels of light carved in the blackness of the station disclosed vistas of Brescia the color of honey, almonds, and salmon. Red smokestacks rose above turreted palaces. There were green shutters everywhere.

Now that they were in Italy proper, Kafka's high button shoes and black fedora which had been so smartly contemporary in Prague, his new frock coat with its pinched waist and flaring skirts, seemed inappropriately sober, as if he had come to plead a case at law rather than to see the air show at Montechiari. The land of Pinocchio, he reminded himself, and, rubbing his hands together and blinking in the generous light of the street, he remarked to Otto and Max that here they were in the country of Leonardo da Vinci.

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A hat sat on the sidewalk. A cane carried in the crook of an arm hooked a cane carried in the crook of an arm. Each pulled the other out and both fell together. Everything seemed to be the grand moment of an opera about the arrival of the barbarians in Rome.

Max through some quickness that was beyond Otto and Franz, who stood together more stunned than merely hesitant to decide the direction in which they ought to move, had already bought a newspaper. Under a headline in stout poster type the whole significance of their journey was proclaimed in prose which, as Max remarked, wore a waxed moustache. Papers in Italy were not read in coffee houses but on the sidewalks, the pages smacked with the backs of hands, the felicities of the paragraphs read aloud to total strangers.

"Here in Brescia," Max read to them once they had found a table at a *caffé* on the Corso Vittorio Emanuele, "we have a multitude the likes of which we have never seen before, no, not even at the great automobile races. There are visitors from Venice, Liguria, the Piedmont, Tuscany, Rome, and even Naples. Our *piazzi* swarm with distinguished men from France, England, and America. Our hotels are filled, as well as every available spare room and corner of private residences, for which the rates rise daily and magnificently. There are scarcely means enough to transport the hordes to the *circuito aereo*. The restaurant at the aerodrome can easily offer superb fare to two thousand people, but more than two thousand must certainly bring disaster."

Here Franz whistled an air of Rossini.

"The militia," Max read on, "has already been called to keep order at the lunch counters. At the humbler refreshment stands some fifty thousand people press daily all day long." Thus *La Sentinella Bresciana* for the ninth of September 1909.

They took a fiacre to the Committee, hoping that it would not fall to pieces under them before they arrived. The driver, who for some reason was radiantly happy, seemed to turn alternately left and right at every corner. Once they went up a street which they were certain they had seen before. The Committee was in a palace. Gendarmes in white gloves rattled their long swords and directed them to concierges in grey smocks who pointed to the heads of stairs where there were officials in celluloid collars who

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directed them to enormous rooms where other officials, bowing slightly, gave them frail sheets of paper on which they wrote their names and addresses and occupations. Max proudly listed himself as *novelist and critic,* Kafka wickedly wrote *journalist,* and Otto, humming to himself, *engineer.*

Pinocchio clattering down a hall with a gendarme hard on his heels was lost to sight when Kafka stuck his head around a door to see.

In a green room into which they were summoned their papers were spread out on a desk from which a bald official in a fuchsia tie welcomed them in the name of the Società Aerea d'Italia. He found the name of an *albergo* in a notebook and Max copied it down.

Pinocchio had just cleared a corner when they came outside, and a gendarme hopped awhile, and pulled his moustaches awhile, before giving full chase.

The landlord of the inn, when they got there, was a copy of the functionary of the Committee, except that he did not affect a tie. His fingers wiggled beside his face as he talked, spit flew from his lips. He rubbed his elbows, bowed from the waist, and put their money, which he knew that as men of the world and of affairs they wished to pay in advance, in some recess under his coat tails.

By asking each other in all seriousness they discovered that their room was the dirtiest that any of them had ever seen. Moreover, there was a large round hole in the middle of the floor, through which they could see card players in the room below, and through which, Max observed, Sparafucile would later climb.

Light lay flat and ancient upon the colonnade of the old forum. In the temple of Hercules, now green-shuttered and rusty with lichen, there was a winged Nike writing upon a shield.

The squares and streets of Brescia were pages from a book on perspective. One might write a novel in which every line met in a single room, an empty room in an empty building in an empty novel. Random figures could not be avoided. Perspective drawings placed gratuitous figures in empty *piazze* or mounting long steps, faceless men with canes, women with baskets, Gypsies with dogs.

What endurance there was in the long Italian afternoons! In Prague the city stirred about against the evening. Lamps came on

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in windows. Smoke rose from chimneys. Bells chimed. In Italy eyes hollowed in the faces of statues, windows darkened, shadows moved across squares and slid up the walls of buildings. The night was a mistake, it was fate, *sbaglio e fato antico la notte.* Da Vinci had put water in globes to magnify the light of his lamps, like Edison with his mirrors. And the Italians did not sleep at night. They slept in the afternoon, they were abed half the morning. At night they talked. They went up and down stairs. They ran in the street, like Pinocchio trying his legs.

The old Tarocchi lay on marble tables, the trey of cups beside a stone jug as Roman as a bust of Cinna. And the *Elementi Analitici* of Tully Levi-Cività lay beside them with unquestionable propriety. Here was a country where Zeno's motion could be understood. Italy's monotonous sameness was like the frames of a film that moved with the slowness of sleep, so that accident and order were equally impossible. The shape of a glass and the speech of an anarchist were both decided upon millennia ago, and emerged daily, with all other Italic gestures, from a rhythm generated in the ovens and olive presses of Etruria.

In Vienna, in Berlin, the new smelled of frivolity and the old of decay, lacking the Italian continuity of things. A poster on a wall as old as the Gracchi announced in pepper greens and summer yellows a comedy with the curious title *Elettricità Sessuale,* and the old woman beside it in her black shawl and with a basket of onions might easily step into the gondola of the dirigible *Leonardo da Vinci,* which was expected to arrive at any moment from Milan, piloted by the engineer Enrico Forlanini, and sail off to market, gossiping about the priest's nephew Rinaldo, who, she had just learned at the baker's, was now the mayor of Nebraska.

A *galantuomo* in pomade and cream shoes cleaned his ears with the nail of his little finger while they dined across from him on sausages and tomatoes. After coffee and cigars they went to bed with a soldierly indifference. Max said that they must agree among them to remember the hole in the floor, through which they could now see a great red pizza being quartered with a knife that, as Kafka observed, was surely a gift of the Khan to Marco Polo, as each of them over the years would tend to doubt his sanity in remembering it. Before they went to sleep Otto had a laughing fit, which he refused to explain, and Pinocchio ran down the

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street with Mangiafoco after him and three gendarmes after them, and a woman narrated just under their window, as best they could understand her, the family affairs of one of the late emperors.

Kafka dreamed that night of Ionic columns in a field of flowers in Sicily, which was also Riva, as dreams are invariably double. There were brown rocks alive with lizards, a moth on a wall, a gyre of pigeons, a stitch of bees. The pines were Virgilian, shelved, and black. He was distressingly lonely and had the impression that he was supposed to see certain statues, possibly of statesmen and poets, wonderfully blotched by lichens and ravaged by the sun. But they were not there. Then Goethe came from behind a column and recited with infinite freedom and arbitrariness a poem he could not understand. There was a rabbit at his foot, eating a mullein.

The Committee had suggested that they take the train to the aerodrome, and they had agreed that, Italy being Italy, this was decidedly an order. What little gain over chaos they could find, Max laid it down as a principle, there they would scramble. The line to Montechiari was the local to Mantua and ran beside the road all the way, so that they had the illusion, once aboard, standing on the swaying and heaving platform between two cars, that the world in all its ingenuity was moving along with them. There were automobiles bouncing in their dust, trembling with speed, their goggled drivers keeping a strange dignity above the wild agitation of their machines.

There were carriages rocking behind horses that paced as if to the *bucca* and drum of the Praetorium, drawing Heliogabalus to the Circus Maximus. There were bicycles on which one could see characters out of Jules Verne, Antinoos in a plaid cap, Heidelberg duellists, English mathematicians, Basques whose faces were perfect squares under their berets, and a priest whose dusty soutane flared as if he were Victory bringing in the fleet at Samothrace.

No aeroplanes were in the air when they arrived.

The way to the aerodrome was like a gathering of the Tartar tribes at an English garden party. Booths and tents, all topped with flags, rose above a crowd flowing in all directions, of people, carriages, horses, and automobiles.

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A heron of a German flashed his monocle and pointed the way to the hangars. A Socialist with a wooden leg was selling *The Red Flag* to a priest whose purse was deeper than his fingers were long. From a bright yellow Lanchester descended a dwarf whose bosom protruded like the craw of a pigeon. His clothes were black and pearl, with elaborately buttoned panels and facings.

Gypsies haughty as Mongol royalty stood in a line, watched by a gendarme whose very eyes seemed waxed.

Above the bumble of voices they could hear a band clashing its way through the overture to *I Vespri Siciliani,* and suddenly a clatter of cavalry parted its way through the crowds, a brave disarray of silken horses, tossing plumes, and scarlet coats.

An old woman with a milky eye offered them bouquets of tiny white flowers. Beside a French journalist in pointed shoes stood a peasant in a great coat that had seen Marshal Ney.

The hangars were like large puppet theatres, their stage curtains drawn, Otto explained, to keep all the inventions from prying eyes. Some aeroplanes were out, however, and they stood, rather guiltily, and allowed the strangeness of the insect machines to astonish them more than they had anticipated. "They are too small," a Frenchman said from behind them.

The Brothers Wright were indeed not there. They were in Berlin, but here was their rival Curtiss sitting in a folding chair, his feet propped on a benzine tin. He was reading *The New York Herald Tribune.* They looked at him in utter awe. Kafka appreciated his professional nonchalance, which was like that of an acrobat who is soon to be before everybody's eyes, but who for the moment has nothing better to occupy him than a newspaper. He was satisfyingly an American.

Then they saw Blériot.

A man with calm, philosophical eyes stood with folded arms and legs spread. Twice he broke his meditative stance and strutted from the door of his hangar to the engine of an aeroplane on which two mechanics were working. The mechanic bending over the engine kept reaching back an empty hand, its fingers wiggling, and the other mechanic put into it a wrench or screwdriver or wire brush.

"That is most certainly Blériot," Otto said. "Because that is his airship, the one in which he flew the channel."

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Max remembered later, at dinner, the anecdote of the father and son on horseback who came upon a painter at work in a field. "That is Cézanne," said the son. "How in the world do you know?" the father asked. "Because," the son replied, "he is painting a Cézanne."

It was indeed Blériot. He wore a snug cap with ear flaps that tied under the chin, like the caps of the medieval popes. His nose was *cinquecento,* a beak befitting a bird man. He kept darting forward, standing on tiptoe, and watching the fingers of the mechanic.

The Blériot XI was a yellow dragonfly of enamelled wood, stretched canvas, and wires. Along its side ran its name in square letters of military grey: ANTOINETTE 25 CV. Otto offered the information that its motor had been built by Alessandro Anzani. Its power was clearly in its shoulders, where its wings, wheels, and propeller sprang at right angles from each other, each in a different plane. Yet for all its brave yellow and nautical wire-work, it was alarmingly small, scarcely more than a mosquito magnified to the size of a bicycle.

Near them a tall man with thick chestnut hair held his left wrist as if it might be in pain. It was the intensity of his eyes that caught Kafka's attention more than his tall leanness which, from the evidence about, marked the aeronaut and the mechanic. This was the age of the bird man and of the magician of the machine. Who knows but what one of these preoccupied faces might belong to Marinetti himself? This was a crane of a man. The very wildness of his curly brown hair and the tension in his long fingers seemed to speak of man's strange necessity to fly. He was talking to a short man in a mechanic's blue smock and with an eye-patch. From his mouth flew the words *Kite Flying Upper Air Station, Höhere Luftstazion zum Drachensteigenlassen.* Then the small man raised his square hands and cocked his head in a question. *Glossop,* was the answer, followed by the green word *Derbyshire.*

Further along another aeroplane was being rolled from its hangar. Before it an aviator walked backwards, directing every move with frantic gestures.

Otto squared his shoulders and approached a man who was obviously both an Italian and a reporter. *"Informazione, per fa-*

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vore," he said with a flamboyance Max and Franz had thought he used only upon the waiters of Prague. The reporter's eyes grew round and bright.

"Per esempio?"

"Chi è il aviatore colà, prego?"

"È Ruggiero. Francese."

"Ask him," Franz said, "if he knows who that tall man is with the deep eyes and chestnut hair."

"E quest' uomo di occhi penetrante e capigliatura riccia?"

The reporter did not know.

Nothing seemed ready to fly. They wandered to the bales of hay which separated the flying field from the grandstand where society sat in tiers under a flag-hung canopy. It all looked like the world's most crowded Impressionist painting. In a wicker chair the heavy Countess Carlotta Primoli Bonaparte sat under a blue parasol. She was the center of a flock of young ladies veiled in blue and pink.

Were the three Bourbon princesses here, Massimilla, Anatolia, and Violante? To move from the long steps of the Villa Medici, now scattered with the first leaves of autumn, from the tall trees and noseless herms and termini of their walled Roman gardens to the hills of Brescia, was it simply an outing to which they were invited by male cousins all moustaches and sabres? Yet D'Annunzio was said to be here, who had published this year a *Fedra* and a *Contemplazione della Morte,* titles which reminded Kafka of mortuary wreathes, and had they not heard that he was taking flying lessons from Blériot?

They saw Puccini. He was leaning on the barricade of straw that protected the grandstand. His face was long and his nose a drunkard's.

The profile of a lady with a perfect chin and gentian eyes was blocked from Kafka's view by the top hat of a gentleman in bassets, and then, as Max was trying to show him a boy in a sailor suit walking on his hands, he discovered that all the while he had been thinking of the interior of high grass, the mouse's world.

Blériot was going to fly. Arms waved. Mechanics slapped their pockets. Blériot, with a nonchalant pivot in the swing up, was suddenly in his machine, holding the lever by which he was to guide, a kind of upright tiller. Mechanics were everywhere. One

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wondered if they knew what they were doing or if they were frantically preserving their dignity. Blériot looked toward the grandstand but obviously did not see it. He looked in all directions, as if to assure himself that the sky was still there, and that the cardinal directions still stretched away from him as they always had.

Kafka realized with a shiver somewhere deep under the lapels of his coat that nothing extraordinary was happening as far as Blériot was concerned. He had seen the wrinkling crawl of the Channel thousands of feet beneath him; he had seen farms and rivers and cities stream below him as casually as one watches fields from a train window. He had the athlete's sureness and the athlete's offhandedness. Perhaps only in the awful light of the extraordinary was there real calm in human action. Nothing he might do was superfluous or alien to the moment.

A mechanic was at the propeller, grasping it with both hands and standing on one leg for leverage. He pulled downward with a fierceness. The machine waggled its wings but the propeller didn't budge. Another mechanic took over, and this time it spun, kicked, and froze in another position. One after another they spun the propeller. The engine spit and whined, dying in its best efforts. They brought spanners and screwdrivers, a can of oil, and began work on the engine. One could feel the excitement in the grandstand wilt. Talk sprang up. Otto did not take his eyes off the beautifully trim yellow machine.

The propeller was stubborn, and worse than stubborn, for it stalled after a few hopeful whirrs as often as it refused to spin at all. Blériot's heroic indifference was wearing thin, though even the most comely Italian ladies could be made to understand that the fault was in the engine. A long-beaked oil can was brought from the hangar by a running mechanic. Another took it from him and poked it here and there in the engine. A mechanic brought what was probably a part for the engine. A part like it was unscrewed, taken out, and compared critically by three mechanics, who talked softly, as if in a dream. The Princess Laetitia Savoia Bonaparte watched them with purple eyes, as well bred as if she were at the opera.

Blériot climbed down. Leblanc swung up to replace him. Otto opened and closed his hands in sympathetic help. He remarked

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that Blériot had crashed some eighty times before he flew the Channel. He was not a man to be discouraged. In the Channel flight an English rain had all but swamped him just as he reached the coast.

The reporter who had identified Rougier for Otto was signalling them with his notebook. He opened it as he ran toward them, tearing out a page, which he handed Otto with a smile of ancient courtesy. Otto frowned over the page. The reporter took it back and frowned at it himself. Then with the air of a corporal delivering a dispatch to a field-marshal, he gave the page back and hastened away, for something new was developing around Blériot's aeroplane.

Otto gave the page to Franz. "There's the name of the man you asked about," he said. "He wrote it down for the *giornalista.*"

Kafka looked at the name. It read, in light pencil, the kind meticulous men used to jot down fractions and the abbreviated titles of learned journals, volume, number, and page, probably a thin silver pencil with fine lead, *Ludwig Wittgenstein.*

"Who?" Max said.

Suddenly the propeller was spinning. Blériot ducked under a wing and vaulted into his seat. The mechanics grasped the aeroplane, for it was beginning to roll forward with trembling wings. Their clothes rippled. Blériot's moustache blew flat against his cheeks. The engine deepened its voice and the propeller whirred on a higher note. He was going to fly. Everyone exchanged glances and quickly looked back at Blériot. The aeroplane waddled forward. It seemed to slide rather than roll, and darted one way and another like a goose on a frozen river. Kafka was appalled by its desperation and failure of grace before he reflected that the most agile birds are clownish on the ground. Surely there was danger that it would tear itself to pieces before it got into the air. Now it was making a long curve to the left, hopping and sliding. Then it wagged its wings and flew up, bouncing once in the air while no one breathed.

He flew out toward the sun. Then they realized that he was making a long turn and would fly over them. A slash of light flared on his wings when they dipped.

As he passed overhead he seemed to be a man busy at a desk, pulling now this lever, now that, and all with studied composure.

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Heroism, Kafka reflected, was the ability to pay attention to three things at once.

It was not after all a machine for the grave Leonardo, his white beard streaming over his shoulder, his mind on Pythagoras and on teaching Cesare Borgia to fly. It was rather the very contraption for Pinocchio to extend the scope of his mischief. A random wizard would have built it, an old Dottore Civetta of an artificer who had not been heard from by his friends since his graduation from Bologna. He would have built it as Gepetto carved Pinocchio, because the image was latent in the material, and would not have known what to do with it, being too arthritic to try it himself. The fox and the cat would have stolen it, being incapable of not stealing it, and enticed Pinocchio into it, to see what trouble would come of it.

Blériot hummed in circles around them like an enormous bee.

Now there was a rumor going through the crowd. They picked it up in German. Calderara had crashed on the way to the air show. There were distressed faces everywhere. He was flying his Wright. He was hurt when he crashed. He was not hurt when he crashed. The Wright was ruined. The Wright could be repaired in a matter of hours. He would still fly, if they all had patience. He was the only Italian who was to fly, and now the Italians must watch only foreigners fly at their own air show.

He would turn up, most certainly, with a gloriously bandaged head.

The band, which had been playing idle waltzes, struck up *"La Marseillaise,"* a tribute to Blériot, who was obviously going to fly over the grandstand. Women cowered and waved their kerchiefs. Officers threw him salutes. They could see him plainly. He did not look down.

He was going to land, they heard, only to go up again. The red windsock on its mast filled and rippled to the west. A man in a grey fedora remarked that the wind was just so, and that Curtiss was going to put down the *Herald Tribune* and fly. Blériot was flying for practise, they supposed, for the sheer fun of it. Now they were all to fly for the Grand Prix de Brescia. There was a stir on the grandstand. Officers and husbands were explaining it to the women.

Gabriele D'Annunzio, who was wearing a cream lounge suit

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striped in lime and a hot rose cravat, was paying his devoirs to Count Oldofredi, the chairman of the Committee. He twirled his poet's finger above his head. The Count grinned at him and nodded, and frequently looked over his shoulder. D'Annunzio waved his arms, spread his open hand on his chest, and talked like a herald in Sophocles. Kafka noticed how thin and short he was, and how accurately he resembled a rat.

Everyone was looking up. From nowhere at all the dirigible *Zodiac* had appeared, and was drifting majestically toward the grandstand. The band began a confused national anthem. Dignified Germans leaned backwards and stared, their mouths open. Two boys leapt up and down as if on springs.

Ladies and gentlemen hastened to the bales of hay. Photographers went under their black cloths. The violent, Republican flag of the *Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika* ran up a staff and as soon as its red stripes and blue reticulation of stars rippled out into the Lombard air there was a roar more sonorous than they had heard all day.

Curtiss's propeller had caught on the first kick. The man himself was standing beside the fuselage of his machine pulling on long-cuffed gauntlets. His throat was wrapped with a scarf which streamed over his shoulder in the wash of the spinning propeller. He mounted, settled himself, and with a toss of his head signalled the mechanics to stand away.

He was across the field before they realized that his preternatural composure was going to take him immediately into the air. His wheels cleared the ground with a dreamy laziness. The prospect which they had watched all afternoon was suddenly immense, and there was a wood on a knoll which they had not noticed either. Curtiss flew over the wood, lost to view. They watched the wood intently, and then they realized that he was now behind them. His machine has arisen from behind some farmhouses. Then he was above them. The underside of his wings looked peculiarly familiar and wildly strange all at once, like a ship in harbor. And while they watched his trim biplane it was already above the wood again, small and melancholy. This time everyone turned to watch the farmhouses. Because they were waiting, the trip seemed longer the second time, but there he was, as suddenly as before, up out of nowhere.

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He made five flights over the wood and around a circuit they could not see, returning each time over the farmhouses. Before he was down, word went around that he had most certainly won the Prix de Brescia. He had flown fifty kilometres in forty-nine minutes and twenty-four seconds. He had won 30,000 lire.

The grandstand stood and clapped as Curtiss climbed from his machine. His wife was standing with a group of men, who ushered her forward. The blood was draining back into her face, and she was trying to smile.

The man named Wittgenstein was again holding his left wrist, massaging it as if it were in pain.

They heard that Calderara was definitely injured, and that his Wright was a wreck.

Curtiss was scarcely down when three machines all started their engines. The evening was coming on, a brown haze with a touch of gold. Dust blew against dust. The crowd became restless. Rougier was now in the air, between two great wings on a sled the runners of which curled up at both ends to bear smaller wings. He seemed to have more to do than he could manage, pulling and pushing levers. But apparently he was managing beautifully, like a man for whom writing with both hands at once is natural.

Blériot was in the air again, too. Leblanc's monoplane looked redder in the air than it had on the ground.

The crowd was moving away, to get seats on the train, which could obviously take only a small part of them. By running, they got to the train in time to pry themselves aboard.

"It is clear," Otto was saying, "that what the Wrights claim, among others, is true. The aeroplane once it is perfected and given the power to fly long distances will make war completely impossible. There can be no movement of troops even in the dark of night which the aeroplane cannot see, and what army could protect itself from an aeroplane with bombs?"

Rougier was still in the air when the train began to move. *Ancora là!* His craft droned above them like a wasp at the end of a long afternoon at harvest time, drunk with its own existence and with the fat goodness of the world.

"Franz!" Max said before he considered what he was saying, "Why are there tears in your eyes?"

"I don't know," Kafka said. "I don't know."

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A. R. AMMONS

Christmas Eve

When cold, I huddle up, foetal, cross
arms:
but in summer, sprawl:

    secret is plain old
surface area,
decreased in winter, retaining: in summer no
        limbs touching—
radiating:
everything is physical:

        chemistry is physical:
        electrical noumenal mind
    is:
(I declare!)

put up Christmas tree this afternoon:
        fell
asleep in big chair: woke up at
3:12 and it
    was snowing outside, was white!

Christmas Eve tonight: Joseph
is looking for a place:
Mary smiles but
        her blood is singing:

        she will have to lie down:
    hay is warm:
some inns keep only
the public room warm: Mary

is thinking, Nice time
        to lie down,
good time to be brought down by this necessity:

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I better get busy
and put the lights on—can't find
    extension cord:
Phyllis will be home, will say, The
tree doesn't have any lights!
I have tiny winking lights, too:
        she will like
them: she went to see her mother:

my mother is dead: she is
deep in the ground, changed: if she
rises, dust will blow all over the place and
    she will stand there shining,
smiling: she will feel good:
she will want
to go home and fix supper: first she
        will hug me:

an actual womb bore Christ,
divinity into the world:
    I hope there are births to lie down to
back
to divinity,
since we all must die away from here:

I better look for the cord:
we're going to
        the Plaza for dinner:
tonight, a buffet: tomorrow there, we'll
    have a big Christmas
dinner:

before I fell asleep, somebody
phoned, a Mr. Powell: he asked
        if I wanted to
sell my land
in Mays Landing: I don't know:
I have several pieces, wonder
    if he wants them all,
wonder what I ought to quote:

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earth: so many acres of earth:
own:
how we own who are owned! well,
anyway, he won't care
about that—said he would
call back Monday: I will
tell him something then:
it's nearly Christmas, now:
they are all going into the city:
some have sent ahead for reservations:
the inns are filling up:
Christ was born
in a hay barn among the warm cows and the
donkeys kneeling down: with Him divinity
swept into the flesh
and made it real.

Further On

Up this high and far north
it's shale and woodsless snow:
small willows and alder brush

mark out streams of melt on the
opposite slope and the wind talks
as much as it can before freeze

takes the gleeful, glimmering
tongues away: whips and sticks
will scream and screech then

all winter over the deaf heights,
the wind lifting its saying out
to the essential yell of the

lost and gone: it's summer now:
elk graze the high meadows:
marshgrass heads high as a moose's

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ears: lichen, a wintery weed,
fills out for the brittle sleep:
waterbirds plunder the shallows.

Life in the Boondocks

Untouched grandeur in the hinterlands:
large-lobed ladies laughing in brook
water, a clear, scrubbed ruddiness lofted

to cones and conifers: frost blurs
the morning elk there and squirrels
chitter with the dawn, numb seed: clarity,

the eagle dips into scary nothingness,
off a bluff over canyon heights: trout
plunder their way up, thrashing the shallows

white: ladies come out in the gold-true sun
and loll easy as white boulders
in the immediate radiance by wind-chilling

streams: I have been there so
often, so often and held the women, squeezed,
tickled, nuzzled their rose-paint luxury:

so many afternoons listened to the rocky
drone of bees over spring-water weed-bloom,
snow-water violets, and distant moss turf.

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JON ANDERSON

The Photograph of Myself

Surely in my eyes that light is now lost,
or has deepened; and my hand, which
in the photograph seems tense
and strong, is less sure.
Is it
the right hand? Yes, it is still
lean, and larger now:

enough to hold this small, boy's hand
within it, like a son's,

perhaps to reassure him, as I do not
my own sons, who are not born.
Across the grey garden

stand some men; I do not know them.

Nor, I think, does he. But they stand firm,
a terrible simplicity
which will disappear. So, too, the other,
unknown, as far from him

as my living self, who again
clicks the shutter.
He did not know it would reach this far.

But it's not real, the boy,
myself, looking out at me but not seeing,

and the garden, which never grows.
Good friend, believe me,
here I am, perhaps your best intention;

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my hand can hold now your entirely small body.
I can love you;
you are the friend's son, or myself

to whom I speak and listen.

Walking Barefoot

In the morning,
I'm not used to it . . .
and the dew
burns; I had thought
to give up every kind of pain.

There is the other life
without passion or memory.
It goes alongside.

It is the turtle's shadow.
It is the snail's shadow.

In each of my steps the grass darkens,
filled with discontent.

Beginning Again

I'll go there.

I can see myself close to the dead,
like a child with no coat.

Like a man without words.
Then I will respect happiness.

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JERALD BULLIS

On This Particular Morning

I hear bravuras of birds. . . .
—Walt Whitman

1

Last night: March rain
Splatting, spits of brightness, thunder; the hills
Filling up like barrels with water
runnels failing
To hold their own,—now this: I dress and pass out
Through my door into light.
And the world is dowered by birds
On this particular morning, in this vaporous quiet
The red-bellied woodpeckers come to the feeders in pairs;
And the robins, those firstlings
Of spring wrangle toward me
singing: warbling more good-
naturedly than musically—moving out
down from the oak
Trees up along the ridge.
Now the chickadee brings
Its three-note melody, and the white-breasted nut-
hatch trills as if
To the bewick riding upside-down on the suet feeder,
Swinging with it
adding his mating call to the crazing
Grace of this quiet chorus,
to the strophe, here!
And antistrophe out along the multiflora hedge
(where
White-crown and white-throat sparrows skirr and whirr)
—Where meadowlarks, now
And again!
take to the air with the flair of angelic
Quail.

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2

—In this loud stillness of the sun's slow
Rising
now, like my long self's others, I
Would wingedly rise
Up wholly out of *it*
out of scythe-snath sickle
Whiffletree and clevis,
As my heart goes out to these like my whole self:
As overhead
The skein of Canada geese, that squall of honkers
Passing to some fake refuge in the far North,
Receives unknowingly my utmost blessing.
My desire in this particular light is the lost,
The forfeited grace of birds
the incredibly clear
Call of the cardinal this morning, the unkillable strength
Of white-throat sparrows that in a week will journey
To the edge of the Arctic tundra.
I would be, BE
By God with them, all of them,
I think: or riding
The topmost limb of a timberline wind-gnarled pine,
In the dwelling-place of the last surviving buteos:
Learning the stormy elan of these jays—
that are coming
Into focus like memory, like hell or high water,
Terrible as blood-
shed in the corner of my cornfield, coming out of nowhere
To strike, there!
Again, and there!
And more,
more than anyone could handle in this life,—
Where they rip the stuffing out of the light-blinded owl.

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Numina

They appear, moving like luminous gray scarves,
Afloat in full moonlight,
And reluctantly step out of the darkness of woods,—

From the place where they hiddenly wait
Bunched together, night after night,
Watching the wind-stirred pasture for a long time,

Before gliding forward to eat.
They have come, like a dream of our oldest lives,
Along leaf-addled ways reclaimed by sumac,

From a pine stand near the ugly crest of a ridge;
And set themselves at dinner, half-composedly,
Alongside of the disturbing out-buildings,

In the fraught-with-danger field,
Or browse in the bearded orchards, without sound.
Like the lighter-stepping dead, the unseen leaf-disturbers,

They are more than becoming;
And in wall-eyed dark I lean, outward, alone;—
Beyond cortex and liver,

Toward meadows awash with mist,
In a slackening wind,
Where deer drift in soft random, like themselves.

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WILLIAM EMPSON

The Alchemist

PROBABLY IT IS A DELUSION caused by ignorance, but my impression is that, in the case of this one play, I stand alone like Abdiel against the forces of night. A number of critics have written quite sensibly about *Volpone,* but in *The Alchemist* (I suspect they feel) the crude formula becomes too hard to resist. There seems no way of jolting its adherents, making them willing to recognise the actual merits of the play. Hence it is unusual to deny that Jonson hates and despises all the characters in *The Alchemist,* either for being fools or for being knaves, because he is so moral. And yet the two plays are very alike, in their general tone as well as their electrically geared-up construction—they are the most frequently revived of Jonson's plays, and I agree that they are much the best. The producer of either play, it will be found, never tries to implement our established critical theory about it (not even making it like non-Euclidean geometry), because the audience is sure to reject that. The case is thus rather odd, and might throw some light on the presumptions of Eng. Lit. in general.

The reason for the difference, I think, is that teachers feel *The Alchemist* to be hiding something worse than *Volpone,* needing more urgently to be kept from the students. The romantic appeal of *Volpone* is felt as a tender indulgence even while it is being ignored by an effort of hypocrisy, but somehow *The Alchemist* is felt to have harshly unwelcome "values" lurking within; this makes it even more urgent for the critic to insist that Jonson has no "values," in that he despises all the characters he describes. The term "values," it seems as well to point out, has the serious function of helping us to recognise the variety of the world. The chief use of reading imaginative literature is to make you grasp that different people act on different ethical beliefs, whereas the chief use of critical jargon is to obscure this basic fact, making you feel at home where you are not. Jonson in this play has a splendid range of characters with wildly different values, and the effect is very funny, but if you think he despises them all you are taken

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aback when he begins to express his own. However, to let him be morally active does not make him a scold; indeed, *Bartholomew Fair* strikes me as rather too permissive, too like the comic Dickens—the audience is expected to love the eccentrics so much that it merely wants them to troop back onto the stage, each repeating his fixed gimmick. It is not the sterner morality but the clockwork plots of the two great farces that haul them up into the cold exhilarating air of the mountains.

Even so, one cannot get on with *The Alchemist* without accepting its moral. This might seem easy to grasp; the play sets out to dissuade its audiences from superstitious belief. But nowadays the rivetting home of the chains of superstition upon captive children is regarded as the prime duty of an educator; so naturally this activity of Jonson, though the critics are always trying to invent ways to tell us how moral he is, cannot be recognised as moral at all. "Do you imagine he was like H. G. Wells?" I shall be asked with exasperated astonishment. Only like Wells on a few plain-man issues, I grant, because he was also prone to the seductive role of the working-class reactionary. But in this play we find him solidly and consciously backing a progressive cause; and I do not see why he should not be respected more for it than Shakespeare in *Macbeth,* lavishing his art upon an encouragement for James to torment old women. I do not, indeed, think we need be so solemn as is now usual over the repeated claims of Jonson to be an improving author. The theatre was under Puritan attack, and to provide a defence for himself and his fellows was one of the uses of his learning. He would expound the classical defence whenever convenient; it should apply, of course, to all good playwrights. Evidently he believed in it, but it would not actually deflect his mind while he was being inspired to create a farce. On the other hand, when the structure of a play required a moral, the doctrine enabled him to present one with vigour; and that is what we find going on here.

Both *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* depend for their intended effect upon rogue-sentiment, upon making the audience half-sympathise with the tricksters. I think this was helped in *Volpone* by the jealousy of London at the maritime trade of Venice, but anyway jealousy at rich business-men would excuse quite a lot. In the more homely setting of *The Alchemist,* the audience are to feel:

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"People oughtn't to be such mugs. If a man can be cheated by obvious rogues like this, he deserves it. They may be doing him a kindness by teaching him a bit more sense." The fun was permissible as in a good cause; and this at least explains why the rogues don't have to be punished at the end.[1] The sentiment comes out strongly in the poetry at III. iii., the right place for a high boast before the fall. Doll on returning to the house says to the exultant Face:

> . . . Lord general, how fares our camp?
> FACE As with the few that had entrenched themselves
> Safe, by their discipline, against a world, Doll,
> And laughed, within those trenches, and grew fat
> With thinking on the booty, Doll, brought in
> Daily, by their small parties.

We ought to share in the sense of glory here. But the two rogues are pretty flat and straightforward; Jonson feels that Doll is too good for them, but she cannot make much difference, and the main interest has to arise from their dupes.

The play begins, like *Volpone,* with a prologue telling the audience they are supposed to laugh. As always, Jonson intends to better them, but here nobody need be offended, because nobody need admit that he is one of the people laughed at. Jonson is no longer writing about an imaginary Italy:

> Our scene is London, 'cause we would make known
> No country's mirth is better than our own.
> No clime breeds better matter; for your whore,
> Bawd, squire, impostor, many persons more
> Whose manners, now called humours, feed the stage . . .

[1] A student objected that Face must needs be presented morally, because he repents:

> They'll tell all.
> How shall I beat them off? What shall I do?
> Nothing's more wretched than a guilty conscience. (V. i, 130)

Face is afraid of losing his confidential relation with his master, and snatches every occasion to beg the sympathy of the audience, with comic despair, from here to the end of the scene, rather over a hundred lines, when he invents the plan of marrying his master to the fortune. No one denies that the characters use moral language; I only say that this is not an impressive repentance. It may have served the purpose of coaxing the audience to forgive Face.

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The sentence goes on *and which,* so *for* has to mean "as providing" not "because"—it does not introduce a clause explaining why England is good for comedy. The confusing grammar perhaps helps to imply a joke, that the English are good comic material for bad reasons (as when Hamlet's madness is said not to matter in England, where all the men are as mad as he), but even so this would be a cosy bit of disguised self-praise. The audience is being put in a good humour at the start; and for that matter Jonson had just returned to the Anglican Church, so he was rather inclined to draw attention to his patriotism. He had no need to tell the major reason, known to all, why England might be expected to produce amusing eccentrics—because it was a uniquely free country (even if they had little reason to believe so). It is thus very absurd to make this passage mean that Jonson the Morose despised his own countrymen even more than the rest of mankind.

The first two dupes presented to us, Dapper the clerk and Drugger the shopkeeper, are silly chaps who take up little time, though they should be acted as earnestly and patiently deluded. Drugger needs a little magic to make his shop pay, and he is let off lightly; Dapper has the worst time, because his object in wanting magic to win bets is to be admired by men friends of better class. It is a democratic or Dickensian moral; if Dapper had only wanted to make money, Jonson would never have driven him into such fierce shame. For the Puritans he feels real enmity; they wanted to close the theatres and interfere with his private life, and he is trying to make mischief, though not lying, when he presents them as inherently traitors intriguing against the King. One does not much hate them, because they are so funny, but they are allowed no spark of decent feeling. On the other hand Sir Epicure Mammon is genuinely admired for being so advanced and public-spirited; he is a patron of the new sciences, which already excited great hopes, and such a man deserved respect not only for his generosity but for his readiness to make a fool of himself—plainly, if he met with any success, it could only be by luck. He enters at the start of Act II, and Act I closes with a fanfare of glowing praise for him by Subtle, too good as poetry to be meant as spiteful or jeering:

> He will make
> Nature ashamed of her long sleep; when Art,

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Who's but a stepdame, shall do more than she
In her best love to mankind, ever could.
If his dream last, he'll turn the age to gold.

Mammon himself is always generous-minded, and speaks much the best poetry throughout the play. His most absurd scene has nothing to do with science; it is when he proposes marriage to Doll, accepting her as an aristocrat who studies philosophy in retirement:

DOLL Blood we have none, sir, a poor baron's daughter.

MAMM. Poor, and begat you? Profane not. Had your father
Slept all the happy remnant of his life
After the act, lain there but still, and panted,
He had done enough to make himself, his issue,
And his posterity noble.

It is of course very absurd, but to think him contemptible for it would be mean-minded; and Jonson had no such temptation, as he considered that Doll really had got high courage and the power of command—not admiring Doll, but admiring ladies, was what he found absurd in the man's delusion, and a part of the artisan audience would agree.[2]

Mammon of course expects luxury, as well as world power, from the chemical operation; and here I meet a grave obstacle. Nowadays everybody seems to take for granted that Jonson loathed and despised luxury, and indeed only mentioned it here to express his hatred and contempt for science, which was already known to be irreligious and materialistic. The critics do not, I think, offer evidence for this interpretation, because they find it obvious from the "whole tone" of Jonson as they read him. And they read him so, no doubt, because they are sure that all other seventeenth-century poets hated and belittled such achievements of science as had yet occurred. It is a pleasure to be able to report that all this is false, and that the small-mindedness which it im-

[2] I used to think there is a Bitter Irony when he says:

This lip! that chin! methinks you do resemble
One of the Austriac princes

—because the Hapsburg jaw came to be the standard example of the degeneration caused by dynastic inbreeding. But Jonson wrote before the sinister change had occurred; the prominence of the jaw might still be taken to mark decisiveness and firm will, with which we know Doll to be endowed.

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putes needs only to be sponged away. (In fact, it is rather hard to see why the poets felt that so much had already happened.) And then, if you read what Drummond of Hawthornden reports about Jonson, or Isaac Walton, for instance, it is surely hard to remain confident that he had a holy contempt for bodily pleasure; and their gossip does not seem malignant, though they probably exaggerate for fun. One should remember, too, that the Golden Age of latin literature, the time when the authors lived whom Jonson genuinely did revere and never ceased to emulate, was notorious for its impudent luxury, which had chiefly meant a display of power; obviously, to win it back would mean a final recovery from the Dark Age. To see this play as when new, I have come to feel, one needs to unwind layer behind layer of false assumptions, rucked and rotting together about a foot deep, as Fenollosa unwound them from the Yumedono Kwannon, the most beautiful statue in the world. Of course, none of this is meant to deny that Mammon is a shockingly silly man, who ought to have been able to see through Subtle, and ought anyway to have attended to what his friend Surly told him.

Anyhow, an audience commonly feels at home with Mammon, whereas poor Kastril really does need a bit more appreciation. He has recently inherited three thousand a year from land, a great deal then, and he feels that the position brings with it obligations; he must become terrifically sporting, an expert in the technicalities of duelling and any other line that may be required. The obligations indeed have become so heavy that they might drag him loose from the position; he at least listens without protest when Face insinuates that he had better sell the estate and use the capital to set himself up as a leading London trickster. (III. ii. 485) It is useless to scold Kastril as irresponsible and sybaritic; he is hag-ridden by his imaginary duties, accepting an early death but terrified that he may fail to die in proper style. This is a case in which the "values" of the modern literary critic, for reasons which are about two centuries old and quite creditable to him, make him blankly unable to read the text. He has never met a young man like that; well, nor have I, or Ben Jonson either I should fancy, because they cropped up mainly under the Regency; but Jonson is grasping the first stage of a historical development there.

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In the play, what matters is his affection for the character; it decides the structure. Jonson takes for granted that poor Kastril has been badly educated—his impulses have been almost fatally misdirected—but that the impulses themselves are splendidly good; he deserves, if ever man deserved, to escape from the suicide into which he is driving himself with frank cries of pain and fear. This gives the play its happy ending; Kastril is saved at the last moment by a quite unexpected twist of his psychology. He finds that the middle-aged business-man is what he really admires, so now he need not be a gangster leader, only another business-man; he and Lovewit can play tricks together for ever after. It is very like the deep thankfulness with which Fielding, acting as a family lawyer, allots good luck at the end to Tom Jones, which Tom fully deserved though he was so very unlikely to have stumbled across it in real life. A modern audience, I should think, would accept this if it were firmly enough presented to them. It does not involve any intellectual sell-out to the ethical claims of the business-men (that is, a good production need not). Surely the discovery of Kastril, that they are quite criminal enough for an aristocrat to admire them, ends the play to the satisfaction of all concerned.

A few years ago I was asked to address a large audience of young people who were just going to take an "*A* level" exam in this play, which would partly decide whether they went to a university; and the vocal ones were sure the play simply tells us that Kastril was a coward. It made me realise the strength of the opposition. I suppose they felt that a man who wants lessons in how to be a bully was necessarily a coward (and duelling can no longer be recognised as a sport). But if a man frequently tells you that he is afraid of doing something, and then invariably does it, you are mistaken to think him a coward; and if Kastril had not told the audience that he realised his plan to be next door to suicide they would only have thought him a fool. But probably the effect of the final scene, at the time, turned on a social detail now forgotten. Kastril enters dragging and beating his sister, angry because she has married Lovewit and has thus not even become a "lady" (as by marrying a knight); Lovewit advances upon him:

LOV. Come, will you quarrel? I will feize you, sirrah.
Why do you not buckle to your tools?

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KAS. God's light!
This is a fine old boy, as e'er I saw.
LOV. What, do you change your copy, now? Proceed,
Here stands my dove; stoop at her if you dare.
KAS. 'Slight, I must love him! I cannot choose, i'faith!
An I should be hanged for it. Suster, I protest,
I honour thee for this match.
LOV. O, do you so, sir?
KAS. Yes, and if thou canst take drink and tobacco, old boy,
I'll give her five hundred pounds more to her marriage,
Than her own state.
LOV. Fill a pipe full, Jeremy.

Lessons in fencing have been the most important part of Kastril's education, and we have often seen him stumbling over the sword he wears. But a business-man, not being expected to defend his honour, did not carry a sword, any more than he carried "tools," like an artisan. He advances upon the young gentleman unarmed, in the mere confidence that he is the new ruling class. Or perhaps that is dragging in more social significance than we need here; the bare fact of his coolness is what leaves Kastril, who has always been much impressed by these tools, morally disarmed. Also his sister has run and sheltered from him behind Lovewit, who threatens him to defend her; this is hard for him to resist. Of course you may still think Kastril a great booby, but if you act him as a coward you have to leave out nearly all the points of this concentrated little scene.

The poet Yeats has pluckily recorded, in the preface to *On The Boiler,* that he was bowled over by business-men in very much this style (though on a different plane), as soon as he had reached enough political eminence to encounter them. "When I was first a member of the Irish Senate," he is recalling, some of the members had been nominated, not elected:

> . . . in its early days some old banker or lawyer would dominate the House, leaning upon the back of the chair in front, always speaking with undisturbed self-possession as if at some table in a board-room. My imagination sets up against this some typical elected man, emotional as a youthful chimpanzee, hot and vague, always disturbed, always hating something or other.

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The spontaneous admiration, indeed, was what got him into very odd political company, where he never felt at home. One might say that the play is a prophecy; Kastril regularly has been bowled over by Lovewit ever since, and it has been rather a bad thing. But one need not, I think, go on to say that Jonson analysed the first stirrings of capitalism.

Another point where Kastril is like Yeats, making him very unlike the stock cowardly swashbuckler, is his desire to build up all his new acquaintance into legends, so that he feels surrounded by the kind of life he admires. This point of character is firmly established at his first appearance, as soon as he has finished mentioning his income:

> FACE Is your name Kastril, sir?
> KAS. Ay, and the best of the Kastrils, I'd be sorry else,
> By fifteen hundred a year. Where is this doctor?
> My mad tobacco-boy, here, tells me of one
> That can do things. Has he any skill?

We in the audience have just been hearing the modest hopes of Drugger for his shop, and feeling that they hardly deserve the help of a magician; so it comes as a shock to find him considered reckless and romantic. The note of loony aspiration or highmindedness is habitual to Kastril, so that he does not seem feeble even when he says, childishly, "Dost thou think, Doctor, I e'er shall quarrel well?" (end of Act III). He quarrels well enough in the next Act—to be sure, Surly refuses to fight out of contempt, and Ananias helps him unwittingly; but then, Surly is tough and has a fortune at stake and is keen to expose the rogues. One cannot think Kastril merely ineffective after he has driven out Surly.

Some critics have argued from the name that the character is meant to be despised. A kestrel is a small kind of hawk, which was not trained like the large ones for aristocratic sport, and as it did damage could be regarded as vermin. The term *coistrel* for a low trouble-maker was derived from it, and no doubt *Kastril* was simply a local pronunciation. The young man is a notably unaristocratic squire, meant to be absurd; but no hawk is really contemptible. The kestrel is the windhover. Kastril knows he is not very big or strong; it is only his unquenchable desire for glory that makes him hurl himself into trouble, with his feathers all scuffed

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up. Ordinary men take a rather different view of him in each generation, and it chiefly turns on how much we need him to fight in our defence. Jonson had himself killed a man in a duel, and was partial to brave young cocks; he would think it very odd of us not to be glad when Kastril is saved.

Much more puzzle arises over Surly. As the name implies, he is an honest man of the sort Jonson liked; not only intelligent enough to see through the cheats, he also labours to expose them in the public interest, or at least to help his friend Mammon. The author is attacking popular superstition exactly as Surly does; but he makes Surly look a fool for it. Surly in order to overhear the cheats dresses himself as a Spanish nobleman (who knows no English), and does so well that they try to marry him to Kastril's sister—Kastril wants this, knowing that the Spaniards are far ahead of the English at the game of aristocracy. Left alone with her, he scolds her and tells her that any other man would have raped her (apparently this would secure her money, because she could only recover her reputation by marrying him):

SUR. For you're a handsome woman; would you were wise, too.
I am a gentleman, come here disguised,
Only to find the knaveries of this citadel,
And where I might have wronged your honour, and have not,
I claim some interest in your love. You are,
They say, a widow, rich; and I am a bachelor
Worth naught; your fortunes may make me a man,
As I have preserved you a woman. Think upon it,
And whether I have deserved you, or no.
DAME I will, sir.

The moral atmosphere being so firmly like Dickens, one expects this good deed to be rewarded with an ample competence. But Lovewit on his return takes the lady and her fortune for himself; he then "rallies" Surly, apparently literally for not having raped her when he got the chance. Kastril has stumped off to search the house for his sister, and Lovewit explains that she

. . . should have married a Spanish count, but he
When he came to it, neglected her so grossly,
That I, a widower, am gone through with her.
SUR. How, have I lost her, then?

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LOV. Were you the Don, sir?
Good faith, now, she does blame you extremely, and says
You swore, and told her, you had ta'en the pains
To dye your beard, and umber o'er your face,
Borrowed a suit, and ruff, all for her love,
And then did nothing. What an oversight
And want of putting forward, sir, was this!

The plot is winding up rapidly, but Surly snatches a moment to say

Must I needs cheat myself
With that same foolish vice of honesty!

before he goes out to search for Face, saying he will beat him if he catches him. The reconditioned Face opens the door and bows him out, saying

In truth, they were strangers
To me; I thought them as honest as myself, sir.

So we are forced to join in laughing at Surly, who is not even allowed to stick to saying he behaved like a gentleman.

C. G. Thayer (1963) is the only critic I happened to come across who recognised this problem (most of them just assume we are meant to despise the whole cast); he says:

> . . . in Mammon and Surly, then, we have the willing victim and the jealous rival. Surly is dishonest, but is outraged that Face and Subtle should be dishonest too, and this feeling of outrage leads him to his attempt to unmask them, with disastrous results for himself. This is a fairly complicated matter; Surly is one of those ironic commentators who would be effective if he were not immoral.

A wild flight of fancy, and yet, come to think of it, there very likely was a Victorian melodrama which plugged home this tiring platitude. How totally unlike *The Alchemist* it must have been. To make Mr. Thayer's point, the other characters must have been ready to believe Surly, so that he would have succeeded in exposing the cheats, had they not already known him to be smirched; from practically the first scene, we must observe the ladies as they pass him in silence labouring not to touch him with their crinolines. But nobody even hints at this idea, and no character however unsmirched could get heard against the hulla-

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baloo of Kastril and Ananias combined (IV. 7). Also Surly cannot be trying to cheat Mammon, as a "rival" to Subtle, because Mammon knows all about him, or at least gives us the only insinuations against him. I would even deny that Surly meets "disastrous results"; he only escapes a marriage which would have been painful to him—the type of woman he wants would have responded to the approach he made. Admittedly, this refined thought is not insisted upon by the play, but it is less remote from the play than the refined thought of my opponent.

Mammon tells Surly, when they first appear, that he is going to make all his friends rich, and he rather spreads himself on the disagreeable things, very unsuited to poor Surly's character one would think, that Surly will never have to do again. He begins with the really splendid phrase

> Thou shalt no more deal with the hollow die
> And the frail card

and seems next to envisage his pimping for rich young men. On the stage, Surly had I suppose better spit and look round defiantly; he is not going to confess to it, whatever it was. Mammon himself is fairly well off and quite respectable; his friends are assumed to be of the same class, though some of them get driven to unfortunate shifts. In fact, this is meant to be the world of *Vanity Fair,* though Jonson is no good at marking fine shades of gentility. Most of the ways of earning money which are now considered honest are not open to Surly, as they would cost him his status as a gentleman; cadging is about all he can do. He can also gamble, and may well have to "deal with" people who cheat at it; the words do not have to mean that he is a cheat too. At what point giving manly advice to a young friend brought one within danger of the shameful word "Pimp" was extremely moot. In short, Jonson is trying to present Surly not as a petty criminal but as a shabby gentleman, and Surly tells Dame Pliant he is a gentleman in his first words to her.

One part of this was very familiar to the Elizabethan mind. If a man is educated above his status, especially by being sent to a university, and does not afterwards get the white-collar job which he regards as his due, then he is sure to make trouble, probably as a revolting politician. For example, the doctrine is used to explain

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Bosola, at the start of *The Duchess of Malfi* (when I was young, it was always being said about Indians). Such a man is the Malcontent, who makes the severe epigrams or wisecracks; Jaques was in part a parody of him but shows the character in the round. However, most playwrights insinuate that their malcontent isn't *really* a gentleman; to assume that the cadging life was quite normal for a gentleman down on his luck (for Rawdon Crawley before he had landed his Governorship) would, I should think, make many people in the first audiences feel rather dubious, like ourselves.

We may now recognise that Dame Pliant is not necessarily an imbecile; she is merely a satire on ladies. Having been brought up to marry for wealth and status, she will accept any man who treats her with cool authority. The theatre was always against the Arranged Marriage (which may have made the operation of the custom less severe, though it went firmly on) and showed this by sympathy for girls in revolt; but to mock the type of girl who accepted it was very unusual. Jonson, it seems clear, had got on better at Court with the men; they were impressed by his learning, his fighting sense of honour, and his conviviality, but the ladies found him coarse. The decisive comment on ladies here is entrusted to Doll Common, who expresses confidence when told to imitate a lady for the plot:

> I'll not forget my race, I warrant you.
> I'll keep my distance, laugh, and talk aloud;
> Have all the tricks of a proud scurvy lady,
> And be as rude as her woman.

The last clause may seem off the point, but Jonson and Doll assume that any professional who has learned the tricks will be better at them than an amateur.

It will now be plain what the "values" are which establishment critics are so unwilling to recognise. Jonson is militantly anti-Puritan, but also anti-Cavalier from a working-class point of view; you might say he is just spiteful about ladies and gentlemen. I am not at home with this tone myself, and I think he is unfair to Surly; but one cannot be surprised if the Globe audiences found it a treat, and no doubt some of the people in our modern audiences like it better than dons do.

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To make an audience accept a successful business-man as a good character is always hard, and no wonder Lovewit has to ingratiate himself at the end by jeering at Surly in a coarse manner. A critic however argues that Lovewit has "taken the wrong turning and joined the fools" when he marries the fortune at the end, and that Jonson "indicates" this by Subtle Irony. We are not even told where the irony comes. The duty of toeing the critical line is no doubt much eased by this rule that you can impute subtle irony wherever you like, but one would like to hear how it could be put across in production amid the uproar of the happy ending of the farce. In its quiet way, this is perhaps the most deadly interpretation of all.

Various critics have tried to show that Jonson had a deep understanding of the rise of capitalism in his time; and I agree at least that, after Volpone, the apotheosis of Lovewit needs a bit of comment. Jonson's own attitude to money, there is plenty of evidence to show, was the traditional one of the artist. An artist should flatter a King till he tosses him a bag of gold (for example, by telling James in a Court masque that he is chaste because he does not keep mistresses); and when he has drunk up all that gold, in the course of his devoted labours, he should go back and flatter the King again. Many good artists have lived like this, and the procedure takes endurance as well as nerve; but it can't be a model for the rest of us, and is unlikely to give much insight into mass economic changes. Jonson understands his business-man well enough, and does not inflate him; but I think the major insights of the play, or bits of moral advice if you prefer, concern matters of vanity or social advantage, which readily distract the characters from their none the less oppressive duty of monetary gain. There is a wonderful lot of truth in it.

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The Poetry of Ghalib

A MULTIPLICITY OF LANGUAGES and literary traditions makes it practically impossible to speak of a single, homogeneous tradition of the written word in the sub-continent. Bengali, as the language of East Pakistan and West Bengal; Tamil, as the dominant language of South India; and Urdu, as the culmination of literary expression in Northern India and modern West Pakistan, constitute at least three major literary traditions of the sub-continent; there are scores of others, both major and minor. Urdu poetry, however, has a place of special interest, for at least two reasons: the literary heritage of Urdu represents by far the largest continuous modern tradition of West Pakistan and Northern India; and, as the product of the Moghul rule, Urdu has for centuries been the language of sophisticated speech in the North and the medium of common exchange throughout the sub-continent. Functionally, Urdu *was* the language of India during the latter centuries of Muslim rule.

In the initial stages of its growth, Urdu was an amalgam of the medieval languages of Northern India—notably Bhasha and Prakrit—and the languages of the Middle East, mainly Persian, which the Muslims brought with them. It is written in the Persianised form of the Arabic script; its syntax is based on a combination of Bhasha and Persian grammar, and it draws its vocabulary from a variety of Indo-European languages. Arabic, Turkish, Persian, various languages of the Indo-Gangetic plain, and more recently English, have all made their contributions to this highly flexible and assimilative tongue.

Like Persian, and unlike Bengali or English, Urdu is a language of abstractions. In this respect Bengali is much closer to English; both strive toward concrete expression, English possibly more so. In Urdu, movement is always *away* from concreteness. Meaning is not stated or expressed; it is signified. Thus, the main tradition of Urdu poetry is of a highly condensed, reflective verse, with an abundance of lyrical effects, verbal complexity and metaphorical abstraction. And this preference for abstraction is not, as should be obvious, a characteristic of the language alone, but also of a whole mode of thinking. Thus, although always a poetry of love, Urdu poetry never contemplates the experience of man in a specific love relation. Specification and personality are kept rigorously out of the poetic substance. While this poetry attempts to fulfill the esthetic and formal requirements of art, it also takes upon itself the intellectual functions which the Western tradition normally associates with abstract philosophy. The entire concept of poetics is determined by this fundamental function of poetry: it is the *nature* of poetry to deal in abstractions, the *nature* of the poet to

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be not just Valéry, but Wallace Stevens and Heidegger all at once, and to be that in poetry, not essays.

The main body of Urdu poetics has been borrowed from Persian. At the center of these poetics is the formal structure of the *ghazal,* the basic poetic form of Persian, Urdu, and half a dozen other languages of the area, as intrinsic to this linguistically multiple tradition as, say, haiku or the linked verse is to Japanese. The ghazal is a poem made up of at least five couplets. If there are fewer, it is considered fragmentary; there is no maximum. Each couplet is usually independent of any other in meaning and complete in itself as a unit of thought, emotion, communication, etc. No two couplets have to be related to each other in any sense whatever except formally (one may be about love, the next about the coming of a season; one about spring, the next about autumn or the cruelty of conventional politics, and so on), and yet they form parts of a single poem. The only necessary link is in terms of prosodic structure and rhymes. All the lines in a ghazal have to be of equal metrical length. The first is a rhymed couplet and the second line of each following couplet has to rhyme with the opening couplet.

It is obvious that this form, based on two lines of equal length as a self-sufficient unit of communication, is the product of the abstract nature of the language and its poetry, and in turn reinforces that character. Only when a unit of poetry is meant to communicate a single thought, emotion or observation, and only when the poets deal with the essence rather than the particulars of an experience, can you have so small a unit and dispense with the idea of continuity, an idea which is central to Western poetics. And, given the abstract nature of the language, the use of the symbolic metaphor is almost inevitable. Given also the essential characteristics of a particular world-view, the ghazal functions with a traditional and easily identifiable pattern of imagery—the tulip, the nightingale, the seasons, a handful of descriptions of this or that human or extra-human state—like Japanese poetry in which a certain flower, the plunge of a stone or even the quality of a specific mood can signify something other than itself, in addition to signifying itself.

Mirza Asad Ullah Khan—known to posterity as Ghalib, a pen-name he adopted in the tradition of classical Urdu poets—was born at Agra, on December 7th, 1797. Ghalib spent the first thirteen years of his life there, then married into a moderately aristocratic family which was attached to the Moghul Court, and moved to Delhi where he lived for the rest of his life. Here he had no home of his own and lived in rented houses; he possessed no books, borrowing them either from friends or from lending libraries. He had no children who survived infancy; in later life, he adopted two children of one of his wife's relatives and brought them up as his own. His contact with the court was close and continuous, and was disrupted only in 1857. Bahadur Shah

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Zafar, the last Moghul king of Delhi, himself a poet of considerable talent and accomplishment, esteemed Ghalib highly and invited him often for poetry readings in the palace. During the months of the Revolt itself, Ghalib stayed in Delhi and spent practically all his time reading, writing poetry and keeping a journal, in Persian prose, in which he recorded, as he saw them, the conditions in the besieged city.

It is impossible to tell when Ghalib started writing poetry; Urdu poets have traditionally arranged their ghazals in alphabetical, rather than chronological order. Chances are that he started very young, for he had collected a whole *Deevan* (Collected Poems) by the age of twenty-five. A great deal of this early poetry was precocious to an extreme degree, full of precious effects, obscurities and verbal ingenuities. He himself rejected much of it when he made his final compilation, and this early poetry is now available only in limited editions. He also left behind him a *Deevan* of ghazals in Persian as large as the Urdu *Deevan*. He regarded his Persian ghazals with greater affection and considered them better than the work in Urdu, but this preference was a kind of snobbery, a judgment which no one but Ghalib himself has ever taken seriously. His real contribution, other than the Urdu ghazals themselves, is the collection of his letters, compiled after his death; these letters constitute perhaps the first important volume of modern Urdu prose, as important for their style as for their portrait of society in his time.

Ghalib died on February 15, 1869.

The Urdu poet, and his Persian counterpart even more, has suffered not only from neglect but also from the wrong kind of attention. By the time the British settled down in their colonies and areas of influence securely enough to start dabbling with the native literary traditions, the nineteenth century was well on its way. This tradition of translation has suffered fatally from the fact that the first conspicuous work was done by people who came into contact with Urdu and Persian because of their involvement with matters of consequence to the Empire; by people, in other words, who were not poets themselves, nor, with the exception of Fitzgerald, even men of imagination. They knew very little about poetry and worked with a poetic ideal derived from a post-Romantic, Tennysonized jargon in which, as Pound once pointed out, the same adjectives were used for women and sunsets. Soon enough, even worse happened. With the British take-over of the educational system, Indians were themselves alienated from their own languages and were brought up on huge chunks of Tennyson, Swinburne, Macaulay, Pater, *et al.* It would be fair to say that by the beginning of this century, most of the educated Indians either didn't read Ghalib at all or read him as a sort of native Tennyson. The complex, the apocalyptic and the moral were carefully sifted out in favor of a post-Romantic grief and a synthetic nostalgia that had

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nothing whatever to do with the concrete stresses of public and private history that Ghalib suffered.

Ghalib lived at a time in the history of the sub-continent similar to the present one in America, in the sense that a whole civilization was breaking up and nothing seemed to be taking its place. For a Muslim poet-intellectual who lived within the older order, life was difficult but intrinsically intelligible, being supported by a tradition within which he could confront and contain experience: there was a religion which he might or might not have observed in external detail and ritual, but which certainly gave him a sense of contact with his God and the universe God had created; there were shared experiences and shared concepts of love, anxiety, friendship and so forth; there was, in short, much suffering in that society but also a sense that the poet lived in essential harmony with it. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, this sense of order was already going and the civilization was in serious doubt as to its own validity: the British trader had assured that the old order was simply not worth preserving. It was at this moment of almost cosmic self-doubt in the sub-continental consciousness that Ghalib grew up and started writing. The seventy or so years of his life are the years when this self-doubt grew into a final despair. There is, in Ghalib as in Hafiz, a moral grandeur, but also an intense moral loneliness, a longing for relations which are no longer possible, and a sense of utter waste. In addition to this despair, there is, of course, a sense of tradition as well, a great longing for it, and a longing for a human contact possible only for a man who is determined to live at all costs within, and not without, human community.

Among Western poets to whom Ghalib may be compared, one thinks above all of Wallace Stevens: all the poems, taken together, create a single, intense impression of a life lived in fact and in mutual relations of facts, in the mind as much as in the imagination, and everything that enters the life also enters, in one way or another, into the poetry of that life. Everything that happens to the poet, either personally or to the times in which he lives, is deeply related to his poetry, but the immediate event is kept scrupulously out of that poetry. The response is immediate and moral, but the urgency is assimilated within privacy, and the response, as it is expressed in poetry, is not so much to the event as to the consequences of that event, to the way it has altered the poet and the experience of the poet. Ghalib undercuts the whole debate which proceeds from an assumption that the particular and the universal are, in some way, in opposition. For Ghalib, the particular *is* the universal: a man's history is the history of his intelligence, *plus* his emotions, *plus* his times. The image of man Ghalib posits is very much a matter of what man makes of his emotions. This too is like Wallace Stevens, where the Romantic and the rational are in a hard, terrifying, victorious embrace.

—AIJAZ AHMAD

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Translations by AIJAZ AHMAD AND WILLIAM STAFFORD

I

Even God's Paradise as chanted by fanatics
merely decorates the path for us connoisseurs of ecstasy.

Reflected among spangles, you flare into a room
like a sunburst evaporating a globe of dew.

Oh, buried in what I say are shapes for explosion:
I farm a deep revolt, sparks like little seeds.

Thousands of strangled urges lurk in my silence;
I am a votive lamp no one ever lighted.

Ghalib! Images of death piled up everywhere,
that's what the world fastens around us.

II

It wasn't my luck to achieve heavenly bliss.
No matter how long I lived, I'd never have made it.

Live on the great promise? Well, you can believe it;
I'd have died of joy had The Great One proved The Word!

This stone would have pulsed blood all over
if man's common suffering had really struck fire.

But who could ever find the True Mate, the Right One?
Could we sniff out soul-food, surely we'd do it.

These high, religious longings, Ghalib! These vaporings!
You'd seem religious if you didn't drink so much.

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III

Here in the splendid court the great verses flow:
may such treasure tumble open for us always.

Night has arrived; again the stars tumble forth,
a stream rich as wealth from a temple.

Ignorant as I am, foreign to the Beauty's mystery,
yet I could rejoice that the fair face begins to commune with me.

Why in this night do I find grief? Why the storm of remembered affliction?
Will the stars always avert their gaze? Choose others?

Exiled, how can I rejoice, forced here from home,
and even my letters torn open?

V

Even at prayer, we bow in our own image;
if God didn't hold His door open, we'd never enter.

He has no image: outside, everywhere, so distinctly
Himself that even a mirror could not reflect Him.

Held behind lips, lament burdens the heart; the drop
held to itself fails the river and is sucked into dust.

If you live aloof in the world's whole story,
the plot of your life drones on, a mere romance.

Either one enters the drift, part and whole as one,
or life's a mere game: Be, or be lost.

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VIII

No more campaigns. I have lost them all.
A doused light, I can't stand all the convivial fraud.

I can't find the truth. The world reflects
crooked, or the crystal ball distorts. The seer turns blind.

The brilliant and the real—I still know it's there,
but you never attain it by jiggling the senses.

So, it's dead in my breast, the zeal, the principle—
its only reward was the gleam while it vanished.

To you, my younger self: I still face the cruel game,
but this heart that beat hopeful can't take it any more.

XII

You should have waited for me a little longer.
Gone on alone, alone you should stay a little longer.

Leaving, you said we shall meet on Doomsday,
as if there could be another, any longer.

You were the full moon in the night for us.
Why couldn't we have stayed the same a little longer?

Yes, you hated me, and with Nayyar were unhappy,
but you didn't even watch your children play a little longer.

They are foolish who wonder why I am still living:
I am doomed to live, wanting death, a little longer.

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XXV

You sensual novices, you are caught on a shuffleboard;
you stagger and pour away your lives.

Look at me, if your eyes can bring you a lesson;
listen to me, if your ears can take advice:

The bar-maid looks ravishing—she blots faith and reason;
the singer, she steals away your senses.

All around us, at night, we used to yearn for
those random bundles of flowers, all around us—

Liquid walk of the bar-maid, the zither's twang:
heaven for the eye, heaven for the ear.

But in the cold morning, abandoned by revelers—
no heaven, none of that old ardor.

A candle, ravaged for the carousing,
has guttered out; it too is silent, without any flame.

XXXVI

Of my thousand cravings, each one a career,
many I've done, but never enough.

You've heard of Adam driven weeping from Eden—
worse, leaving your place I felt you-forsaken.

Drink, for a spell, tarnished my name.
Even a king once found some truth in the cup.

Just when you think someone may feel for your plight,
it turns out he's worse off—even calloused, maybe.

For God's sake, preacher, don't snoop the wrong temple.
You might stumble on something better neglected.

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XXXVIII

Dew on a flower—tears, or something:
hidden spots mark the heart of a cruel woman.

The dove is a clutch of ashes, nightingale a clench of color:
a cry in a scarred, burnt heart, to that, is nothing.

Fire doesn't do it; lust for fire does it.
The heart hurts for the spirit's fading.

To cry like Love's prisoner is forced by Love's prison:
hand under a stone, pinned there, faithful.

Sun that bathes our world! Hold us all here!
This time's great shadow estranges us all.

XL

Only Love has brought to us the world:
Beauty finds itself, and we are found.

All time, all places, call—here, not here:
no mirror finds the truth but in itself.

To know—what do we know? To worship—
emptiness takes us into its craving.

Any trace, glimpse, whatever flickers—
that's all we have, known or not known.

Held by the word, targeted here in openness,
Earth receives the sky bent forever in greeting.

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Translations by AIJAZ AHMAD AND ADRIENNE RICH

IV

Nothing comes very easy to you, human creature—
least of all the skill to live humanely.

Time after time ahead of time, you fool,
standing in panic at the meeting-place.

The molecules of the mirror, if she appear,
longing to open like eyelids and take her in.

My body in the grave, scarred with its disappointments,
and yours, alive as the rainbow glistening through the orchard.

Killing me off she sobs: "I never meant to hurt you!"
Tears of repentance, wept three seconds too late.

VII

Old, simple cravings! Again
we recall one who bewitched us.

Life could have run on the same.
Why did we call her to mind?

Again, my thoughts haunt your street;
I remember losing my wits there.

Desolation's own neighborhood.
In the desert, my own house rises.

I too, like the other boys,
once picked up a stone to cast

at the crazy lover Majnoon;
some foreboding stayed my hand.

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XIII

I'm neither the loosening of song nor the close-drawn tent of
music;
I'm the sound, simply, of my own breaking.

You were meant to sit in the shade of your rippling hair;
I was made to look further, into a blacker tangle.

All my self-possession is self-delusion;
what violent effort, to maintain this nonchalance!

Now that you've come, let me touch you in greeting
as the forehead of the beggar touches the ground.

No wonder you came looking for me, you
who care for the grieving, and I the sound of grief.

XIV

All those meetings and partings!
Days, nights, months, years gone!

Falling in love takes time;
so enough of desiring and gazing.

It all took a certain force of vision
and the youth of the mind is over.

Shedding tears of blood is no game,
a strong heart, a steady nerve, are wanted.

I'm too old for an inner wildness, Ghalib,
when the violence of the world is all around me.

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XV

Not all, only a few, return as the rose or the tulip;
What faces there must be still veiled by the dust!

The three stars, three Daughters, stayed veiled and secret by day;
what word did the darkness speak to bring them forth in their nakedness?

Sleep is his, and peace of mind, and the nights belong to him
across whose arms you spread the veils of your hair.

We are the single-minded; breaking the pattern is our way of life.
Whenever the races blurred they entered the stream of reality.

If Ghalib must go on shedding these tears, you who inhabit the world
will see these cities blotted into the wilderness.

XVI

Now the wings that rode the wind are torn by the wind;
their feathers dust of the desert, their force shrivelled to powder.

Anyone who still can hope is seeing visions.
The walls and doors of the tavern are blank with silence.

What, who is this, coming our way, with the face of an angel,
that the dust of the bare road is lost in a carpet of flowers?

I am ashamed of the destroying genius of my love;
this crumbling house contains nothing but my wish to have been a builder.

Today, Asad, our poems are just the pastime of empty hours;
clearly, our virtuosity has brought us nowhere.

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XVIII

Tulip or primrose, they have to speak in their colors.
Everyone answers the spring in his own dialect.

Poetry is really just a way of meeting poets;
and if they're goodlooking women, so much the better.

What kind of man gets stoned for fun?
Day, night, I need obliteration for my grief.

Facing the bottle, the blotted mind knows what it's facing;
Facing the shrine the mind at prayer knows just as well.

The wine of the occasion changes its vintage,
but the great drinkers are always drunk on themselves.

XX

I suppose my love for you is a form of madness.
Why shouldn't that madness play like fire about your name?

Don't let a nullity fall between us:
if nothing else, we could become good haters.

Our time of awareness is a lightning-flash,
a blinding interval in which to know and suffer.

My method shall be acquiescence and a humble heart:
your method may be simply to ignore me.

Don't lose heart in this skirmish of love, Asad:
though you never meet, you can always dream of the meeting.

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XXVI

Come now: I want you: my only peace.
I've passed the age of fencing and teasing.

This life: a night of drinking and poetry.
Paradise: a long hangover.

Tears sting my eyes; I'm leaving
lest the other guests see my weakness.

I is another, the rose no rose this year;
without a meaning to perceive, what is perception?

Ghalib: no hangover will cure a man like you
knowing as you do the aftertaste of all sweetness.

XXXIX

It's been a long time, love,
since we sat talking and drinking.

My breath is hot again, I'm wordless;
shedding sparks is all I'm good for.

Sight and feeling, those old foes
are friends again, fused in desiring.

Again I watch for her at her window,
waiting for wind in her black hair.

I need to ward off visitors, letters,
hoarding my solitude for her.

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DAVID PAUL FUNT

The Structuralist Debate

In recent years the most important current of French thought has veered sharply from the existentialism which was dominant since World War II. The group of thinkers who have brought about this change have come to be known as Structuralists, and are generally opposed to Humanists, for while the existentialist-humanists have sought for the ultimate freedom and authenticity of man, though it be never represented in reality, and often to the neglect of the conditions within which men think and act, the structuralists are concerned precisely with these conditions or constraints and their formative power for man over and beyond his private fluctuations of subjectivity. Thus the frequent accusation of anti-humanism, of the destruction of man, is answered by an analysis of the humanist conception of man which shows it to be derivative from a theological concept, a myth created when the secular world of science occupied the strongholds of religion.

At bottom the structuralists, like the empiricists since the Eighteenth Century, have accepted that the universe itself, from any possible human vantage point, is discontinuous. The empiricist rejection of metaphysics and turn to psychology has hinged upon the inability to discover any objective principles of continuity, save those of mental association. The existentialists, on the other hand, assume that human experience, however fragmented it may become, is grounded in an original unity—*lebenswelt* or *vécu*—primal history or nature—a backdrop upon which modern man's absence from himself shows itself and which guarantees the possibility of ultimately overcoming his alienation in a return to original presence.

Structuralism defines itself between these two positions. Continuity cannot be found in the substance of existence, yet the world is truly (not illusorily) experienced as continuous. While the universe must indeed be taken as discontinuous (which is the basis of its potential for variety and of the possibility of change), principles of continuity are discoverable. The form they take, however, is neither theological nor psychological, but rather that of the repetition and structuration which is most evident in lan-

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guage, by which series of discontinuous elements give rise to a continuity of sense. Thus the structuralist project, as Claude Lévi-Strauss has emphasized, resembles that of Kant in attempting to discover the laws according to which the human world in its various manifestations is ordered. It differs, however, in that the structuralist seeks not the most general laws of all perceptual order, but particular laws of particular organizations—Myth, Science, Literature, etc. The level, then, at which the investigation takes place lies closer to the surface than the logic of Kant, but deeper than the psychology of the empiricists. It is the stratum which lies between general logic and the already formed perceptible, the point of contact between the abstract law and the concrete sensation.

As their working model the structuralists have taken the principles laid down by Ferdinand de Saussure, in his *Course in General Linguistics,* for a structural science of language or, more broadly, for a science of signs in general. Applying Saussure's distinctions of *langue-parole,* synchrony-diachrony, form-substance, and signifier-signified to such phenomena as the institutions of a primitive tribe, or a work of literature, or even to the scientific or philosophical thought of an historical epoch, they have tried to discover the structure of differential relations or oppositions holding within the system (*langue*) which allows the particular manifestations derived from it (*parole*) to have a sense. It is a sort of analysis which is more interested in how any system *comes to mean* than in *what it means.* In pursuing this path the structuralists hope to develop a precision and objectivity which will avoid on the one hand the pitfalls of subjectivism and ethnocentrism into which their predecessors so often tumbled, through the belief that individual phenomena contain in themselves determinate meanings (a philosophical idea which almost inevitably leads to the assignment of meanings which are a function of the personal or cultural experiences and preoccupations of him who assigns them) and on the other hand the utilitarian position that phenomena have no meaning at all. For the structuralist any cultural item has a particular meaning only by virtue of its oppositions to other items in the same culture-system. In other words, no existing thing contains a meaning in itself; meaning does not lie in the substance of things but in their relations. Hence the same element may have any number of different mean-

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ings depending upon the system in which it is engaged, and outside of *any* system can have no meaning at all.

Although there are innumerable structuralist thinkers, the central figures in France today are five: Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, and Roland Barthes. The areas which they cover are respectively: anthropology, philosophy and history of science, psychoanalysis, Marxism and philosophy of history, and literary criticism and sociology, but since structuralism is primarily a question of method and the implications of method, the wide range of subject-matters does not preclude a high degree of similarity in their positions.[1]

The father of the school, and without doubt its most original member, is the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In his essays collected in *Structural Anthropology* and in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship* he has tried to show that the human mind in its social manifestations is ruled by a system of constraints, that there is an immanent necessity discoverable in the illusion of liberty. "In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship,*" says Lévi-Strauss,

> I had thus chosen a domain which might, at first sight, distinguish itself by its incoherent and contingent character, and I tried to show that it was possible to reduce it to a very small number of meaningful propositions. Still, this first experiment was insufficient because, in the domain of kinship, the constraints are not of a purely internal order. I mean that it is not certain that they take their origin exclusively from the structure of the mind; they may result from the demands of social life, and from the manner in which the latter imposes its own constraints upon the exercise of thought.

Thus Lévi-Strauss has since undertaken to demonstrate that even the realm of myth is ruled by such a system of constraints. For if, in the case of kinship, one might imagine that the requirements come from without, the realm of myth appears to be that in which

[1] Among the basic structuralist works the following should be noted:

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston, 1959); *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, 1966); *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York, 1969).

Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris, 1966).

Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris, 1966); two of the essays contained in this collection have appeared in English: "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Yale French Studies* 36-37, pp. 112-147, and *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (Johns Hopkins, 1969).

Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* (Paris, 1965).
et al. *Lire le Capital,* I-II (Paris, 1966).

Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (New York, 1968); *Mythologies* (Paris, 1957), especially the concluding essay "Le Mythe, Aujourd'hui"; *Essais Critiques* (Paris, 1964); *Critique et verité* (Paris, 1966).

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the human mind is freest to abandon itself to spontaneous creativity, unhampered by external conditions. Thus, if it can be shown that this apparently arbitrary domain, too, is subject to determinate laws, we ought to be safe in assuming, asserts Lévi-Strauss, that the human mind is ruled by laws in *all* its operations.

Between his studies of kinship and those of myth, however, Lévi-Strauss published *The Savage Mind,* in which he set forth the general philosophical view that the human mind is at all times subject to a structure or concrete logic which limits its possibilities and thereby permits them to have a meaning. That is to say that the human subject is not originative of meanings (linguistic, social, mythic, etc.), but is rather the object of the structures which allow it to produce meaningful manifestations (as it is the *langue,* which is the possession of no individual—and which normally remains unconscious to the individual—which allows the individual's *parole* to have a sense, but which also determines, prefigures in the system, so to speak, what he can say). It is primarily on the basis of this book that the philosophical controversy has arisen; for, while no one denies the value of the structural approach as an ethnological method (though some ethnologists might wish to see it completed by other approaches), as an epistemological theory there is considerably more at stake. In the face of philosophical attacks, however, Lévi-Strauss has usually taken refuge in the position that for him structuralism is simply a method of study.

Nevertheless, there is a thesis, contained not only in *The Savage Mind* but in the two massive volumes of mythologies which have followed (*The Raw and the Cooked* and *Du Miel aux cendres*) which goes beyond questions of ethnological method. In the introduction to *The Raw and the Cooked* Lévi-Strauss states his aim: "By means of a small number of myths taken from certain aboriginal societies which will serve as our laboratory, we hope to construct an experiment whose significance, if we succeed, will be of a general order; for we anticipate that it will demonstrate the existence of a logic of perceived attributes, one that occurs over and over again, and that reveals its own inherent laws." Thus we should not be surprised, for example, when it is found that various narrators give accounts of the same myths which vary widely even in important details, without feeling the least uneasiness about

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the contradictions. A naive observer might attribute the difference to the variability of the human subjectivities involved, but he would be at a loss to account for the fact that all the contradictory versions are accepted by the natives as equally valid. In fact, the reason is that the differences in substance do not matter, for it is the coherence of the structure, which may very well retain the same system of oppositions throughout the variations, which gives the myth its identity and its importance for him, even though it is not this structure which he thinks, but the myth itself. It is not what is said in the myth, but how what is said is inscribed in the myth-structure, which defines the world of the native, circumscribes it, and gives it the possibility of making sense to him. Thus in the mythic universe of any speaker of a language, all the possible meanings are given virtually in the structure (*langue*) before they are expressed, and the expression cannot change them but only actualize them.

Finally, Lévi-Strauss hopes, by means of his research into the structure of sign systems, to evade the traditional dichotomy of logic and perception, of deduction and induction, and thus to be able to describe other cultures in their reality (which no a priori anthropology could do) without assimilating *their* perceptions to *our* meanings, as a purely empirical ethnology must inevitably do, since the ethnologist must organize the perceptible in that system of categories which makes it comprehensible to *him*. As in the case of languages, which divide and order the perceptual reality differently, one cannot translate directly. Even if the conceptual content remains identical in the translation there is bound to be some loss or distortion of the flavor. Yet one can attempt to understand the structure of oppositions which make up the original language and give its pronouncements their particular flavor (which is, no doubt, how any fine translator sets about capturing the essence of the language of a poet he intends to render into another tongue). The project of Lévi-Strauss is that of understanding the other concretely as Other; not as a form of abstract universal man which lacks the specificity to be meaningful (for it is always a matter of repetition of the same), nor as a naive or deformed extension of myself or my culture, but in its specific otherness.

The general outcome, Lévi-Strauss believes, ought to be to replace man and culture in nature by showing the system of natural

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laws to which the human mind is subject in all its operations, even its apparently most arbitrary; to overcome the absolute opposition between nature and culture postulated by earlier anthropologists and to show how sign systems, structures of natural constraints to which the human mind is subordinated, but which are capable of giving a sense to perceptual reality, provide the apprenticeship of biological man to society. Virtually all the major ideas of structural thought are to be found in the work of Lévi-Strauss, though they frequently become difficult to disengage as they are adapted to diverse realms of study, embedded as they are in the examination of concrete objects of experience. Let us attempt to disengage them in the work of several other writers of the group.

In *Les Mots et les choses* Michel Foucault sets himself the task of demonstrating how it is that we are able to bring together a variety of different observable entities and place them face to face in a common conceptual space such that their arrangement makes sense to us. What, that is, is the particular configuration of the epistemic field which allows us to classify entities in such and such a way and prevents us from being able even to conceive other equally possible classifications? To answer that it is the inherent similarities of the things themselves which determines the order of classification is superficial, since it is evident that entities have innumerable resemblant properties according to which we do not, and cannot even sensibly conceive of classifying them.

The domain with which Foucault is concerned is that of the different epistemological orders which have held sway from the Renaissance to the present and which have determined the forms in which thought and observation occur, a domain which lies between logic—the reflective study of the possibilities of order in general—and perception, which is always already ordered. This study Foucault calls *archeology,* since it is a question of digging beneath the welter of opinions in order to lay bare the epistemological structures which make possible those opinions, and not others, in a given epoch. Archeology, then, is strongly opposed by Foucault to history of ideas, which is a mere *doxology,* a study of the variety of opinions, which does not account for what it is that provides the possibility of these particular opinions and oppositions of opinions.

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Foucault considers in detail three periods: the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the present, each of which works within a specific historical a priori which he attempts to unearth. Wielding a powerful erudition, he examines in each of these epochs the conception of language, that of nature, and that of economics, and tries to show that in each period the three are homologous, taking their form (even in their internal oppositions) from the underlying a priori. The two great ruptures, toward the middle of the Seventeenth Century and toward the end of the Eighteenth Century, remain unexplained, and appear to be considered ultimately inexplicable by Foucault, for we find not a hint of a reason for them in his work. The continuity of the development of modern science, so cherished by historians of ideas is, according to him, an illusion, merely a "surface effect." The biology of the Nineteenth Century is no more an offshoot of the natural history of the Enlightenment than the latter is a development of the bestiaries of the Renaissance. There is no possible continuity between the study of the phenomenon of life and the laying out of a tableau of nature, between the study of the functioning of organs and that of the characteristic forms of beings. Parallel discontinuities are to be found in the conceptions of economics and of language.

Thus Foucault transports into the study of Western thought tools and goals similar to those of Lévi-Strauss in the study of myth systems. His attempt, too, is to show the systems of laws and constraints within which the human mind labors, the underlying configuration which determines the form of all thought, of all observation, of all the sciences, and of all the other branches of knowledge in a given period. And just as myth systems break down, sometimes suddenly, for internal or external reasons which often remain inexplicable, to be replaced by new systems, using perhaps the debris left by the old (which is what gives the illusion of continuity) but in no sense developments of them, since the fragments recuperated are engaged in a different structure or configuration and thus take on a different signification, so the same occurs in the history of Western thought, which is, after all, just another myth system.

The keystone of Foucault's system, however, is its claim that both man and the sciences of man are merely the necessary devel-

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opments of the particular *episteme* which came into existence in the late Eighteenth Century, and are destined soon to disappear with its destruction and replacement. "Strangely, man—the knowledge of whom passes in the eyes of the naive for the most ancient study, existing since Socrates—is, without doubt, nothing more than a certain fissure in the order of things. . . . Man is merely a recent invention, a figure which is not two centuries old, a simple wrinkle in our knowledge, which will disappear as soon as the latter has found a new form." The sciences of man did not exist before the Nineteenth Century for the simple reason that man did not exist before that time. Man, for the Enlightenment, was no more an object which could be studied than was language, had no more history, no more depth than it, but was rather the empty space in which the tableau of nature could be represented. It is only with the objectification of man, Foucault argues, that the sciences of man can arise, and it is this too, which gives them their fatal instability, half positive science, half philosophical reflection, vacillating always between the two, continually undermining their "positivities" concerning man by reflection on man the knower of himself, and cutting short their reflection on the being of man in their drive for positive knowledge. The precarious status, then, of the sciences of man is due, not as is so facilely stated, to the excessive complication of their object; nor is it due to the arbitrary choice of an inappropriate model. Rather their impossible situation is inherent in their relation to their object. The sciences of man are not sciences because it is not a pre-existent object—man—which gave birth to them, but the modern *episteme* which gave birth to man as an object. What gives them their specific character is their ambition to treat as their object the very representation which is the condition of their possibility. Thus Foucault concludes: "One thing, at least, is certain: it is that man is neither the oldest problem nor the most constant one that is posed to human knowledge. . . . Man is an invention of which the archeology of our thought easily shows the recent date. And perhaps the immanent end."

Throughout the variety of the work of Roland Barthes the attempt is always to discover what it is that is specific to literary discourse, what it is that makes literary language literary as distinct from other uses of language, and to show how the writer attaches

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himself in a particular way to his society or detaches himself from it, by the manner of writing the language (*écriture*) which he chooses to employ. Thus from the beginning Barthes states that "this third dimension of form [that by which the writer signifies that his writing is literature] also attaches the writer to his society. . . . There is no literature without a morality of language."

The fundamental issue in the morality of signs, for Barthes, is whether the sign presents itself naively, for what it is, a sign, or pretends to be something more than a sign, a piece of nature; whether the sign clearly maintains the distinction between words and things or attempts to obliterate it. It is this difference which distinguishes the mythic from the non-mythic use of language. The myth, then, is not defined by its object but rather by the way in which it presents its message. There are formal limits to myth, but no substantial limits; thus anything or everything can be myth. Over and above the contingent nature of causes and effects the myth projects a second system, a system of apparently necessary associations, which in turn pretends to be nature itself, essential and eternal, and which reduces the former to the level of the merely accidental. The myth always involves a duplicity, for it is always a second semiological system which redoubles a primary system upon which it depends for nourishment, but which it at the same time causes to disappear, i.e., to become its latent sense.

The opposite, for Barthes, of mythic language which immobilizes reality, is the language of action, that which represents the world in order to change it. What Barthes calls transitive language is the language which is formed at the level of matter and its transformations, and not of its representations or its meanings. It is the primary sign system which remains in direct contact with the world and refuses the flight into a secondary system which thrives only upon its deceptive relation to other signs, upon the game of hide-and-seek of manifest and latent sense.

What then is the status of literary language in this plan of semiological systems? After an early attempt to define a transitive literature, the dream of many writers and critics, Barthes realized that literature can never be purely transitive, for it is not the literal, active, provocative character of language which is the being of literature. It is the second language which is created by a dis-

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course, the signification to which it gives rise over and above the literal that constitutes it as literature. Thus literature too partakes of the redoubled character of myth; like myth it is an immobile object; but it is not an immobilizing object. It is rather a question posed to the world (unlike myth which is always an assertion), which demands an answer, but which admits of many answers (though not of *any* answer), an equation which at the same time allows many interpretations.

Throughout the wide range of Barthes' writing, his constant quest is for one thing: not what the terms of linguistic systems signify, but how linguistic (or more broadly, semiological) systems, through their structuration, are able to signify. The literary discourse necessarily escapes its author. Thus it cannot be the job of the critic to restore to it what the author *really* meant, but rather to bring to light what founds the possibility of its having meaning. Literature ought, in principle, to be taken as authorless, for it is not the author but his system which means. The project of criticism is not to discover truths, then, but only validities; for criticism, like literature, is only language, and meta-language at that, and a language in itself can be neither true nor false but only valid, that is, constituting a coherent system of signs, or not. The rules which govern literary language do not concern the conformity of this language to reality but only its submission to a system of signs fixed by the author.

The critic's activity, therefore, concerns the exteriorizing of the structure of the work's system, which involves two basic processes. The first is the decomposition of the work in order to find its recurrent unities, unities which are in themselves empty, gaining a sense only by their differential situation, but such that the slightest change in the form by which they are set in opposition to other unities of the system produces a change in the whole. The second process is that of reconstituting the object, or rather a simulacrum of the object, by the discovery of the rules of association of the unities. It is by the ruled recurrence of the unities that the work appears endowed with a sense. The reconstituted object thus makes manifest what remained hidden in the original, the rules of the functioning of the work. "Between the two objects, or the two moments of the structuralist activity, *something new* is produced," says Barthes, "and this something new is nothing less than

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the intelligible in general."

The critical task par excellence, then, is not to interpret the work, to assign a meaning to it, a practice which is inevitably historically limited, egocentric or ethnocentric, but to show how it is an object capable of being interpreted. "At the limit," writes Barthes, "one could say that the object of structuralism is not man the possessor of certain meanings, but man the fabricator of sense, as if it was not at all the content of meanings which exhausted the semantic ends of humanity, but only the act by which these historically variable, contingent meanings are produced. *Homo significans:* such would be the new man of structural research."

The main question for Louis Althusser is closely related to that of Barthes. How, he asks, does the specific discourse of *Capital* distinguish itself from the ideological discourse which preceded it and which has to a large extent followed it? What is ideology? What is science? And what is the specific difference between them? Modern thought through the early Marx, Althusser argues, has persisted in believing that the abstract essence can be read out of the real object. Deriving knowledge from reality would thus be like discovering the meaning of a text, the question of knowing would be a question of seeing what is there; Marx, with his improved vision, would see what Adam Smith failed to see—the difference, for example, between constant capital and variable capital, or between the value of labor and that of labor-power—and Marx's vision would serve as the measure of Adam Smith's myopia. But it is just the case, Althusser argues, that Marx does not take this path, which is that of persistent misconception as to what it is to read a text (thus the two volumes of essays edited by Althusser are entitled *Lire le Capital*) and of what it is to gain knowledge. Marx does not observe the vision of classical economics through the grill of his own vision, but rather always compares classical economics with itself: what it sees with what it does not see. For what Adam Smith does not see is not merely what he overlooks, but what is necessarily invisible to him, the invisible condition of what he does see. The invisible is not simply what *fails* to appear, what falls *outside* of the field of vision, but that which is defined by the visible as its *particular invisible,* what it is prohibited from seeing. The question, then, for Althusser is not of the exterior limits of a mode of

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thought, but of the interior limits, of that which it cannot think. One can think to infinity in any theoretical mode of thought (as within any historical a priori for Foucault), for it has no exterior limits, but *what* can be thought in it and what necessarily remains invisible to it is limited internally by its *problematic,* that is, by the system of questions which commands its answers. Thus, in order to comprehend the meaning of the answers an ideology gives, it is first necessary to pose to it "the question of its questions." For its problematic is, in itself, an answer, Althusser claims, not to its own internal questions but to the objective problems posed to it by its time. So, rather than simply trying to see more than Adam Smith (but with the same necessary invisible), what Marx tries to see is the necessary relation between the visible of classical economics and its particular invisible. His thought, then, is not a continuation of classical economics, but is situated on quite another ground, from which the visible-invisible structure of the former can be apprehended.

Thus, at a blow, the Marx of *Capital* breaks the union between the object of knowledge and the real object. Knowing is not seeing the real better but relating that which is thought to the latent conditions which make this thought possible. The object of thought is a thought object and not a real object (a production, not a discovery). And the two real questions, Althusser asserts, are: What is the process of production of the object of knowledge, and what is the *mechanism* which assures the appropriation of the world by knowledge. It is just the failure to set itself this latter question which constitutes virtually all modern philosophy as ideological. The problem which the philosophers pose themselves, Althusser claims, is rather to produce the *guarantee* of the identity of thought and reality. The different sorts of empiricism and idealism have all been merely different ways of producing this guarantee, the former by showing how the order of knowledge is abstracted from the order of reality, the latter how the order of reality is produced by the order of thought. But all the assurances are simply ways of fitting a theory to an answer already given for extra-theoretical reasons (religious, moral, political, economic): The order of thought and the order of reality *are* identical. It is this which constitutes a mode of theorizing as ideology. "I say that this position of the 'problem' of knowledge is *ideological,*"

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writes Althusser,

> in the measure that this problem has been formulated beginning from its "answer," as its exact reflection, that is, not as a real problem, but as a problem which it was necessary to pose in order that the ideological solution which one wanted to give it might really be the solution to this problem. . . . In the theoretical mode of production of ideology, the formulation of a *problem* is only the theoretical expression of the conditions allowing a *solution* already produced outside of the process of knowledge, because imposed by extra-theoretical requirements.

Like myth for Barthes, ideology for Althusser is always a repetition of the same, tautological, because the ideological theory is merely the mirror image of its conditions set by its problematic, which in turn has been determined by ends foreign to the theory itself. It is the reduction of *cognition* to *recognition,* not the acquisition of new knowledge; the reduction of knowing to simple seeing that certain things "go together," because it has been supposed in advance that they cannot but be identical. It is the "discovery" that the world is just as one always knew it had to be. The only hope of escaping from the closed circle of ideology, Althusser maintains, is by the radical foundation of a new problematic which allows the real problem to be posed.

It is just this function, he argues, that Marx performed, in refusing to extend ideological philosophy (either by agreement or by opposition within the same mode), but by instead radically separating the object of knowledge from the real object, and by posing the questions of the specific process of production of theoretical knowledge and the specific mechanism by which it appropriates the world.

Structure and Subject

Who thinks? Who speaks? Such are the questions that run through structuralist theorizing. The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan answers: *ça pense. It* (the id) thinks; that is to say, the unconscious. And the unconscious according to Freud, Lacan claims, is Otherness; that which is not I or any other individual as subject, which is always exterior to the subject, but which nevertheless has the structure of language. In fact, we may say that it *is* the structure of language, in which the individual is always only a partial participant, leaving holes or blind-spots in his discourse,

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through which the unconscious shows itself. So, too, for the other thinkers we have considered, while the subject may do the thought-work or the speech-work, it is the structure which allows him to do it, which creates meaning and by virtue of which he may deliver his meanings. The structure, however, remains unconscious—in a sense more Kantian than Freudian. The speaker does not think the laws of his language when he speaks, though they are the necessary conditions of his speaking. Nor does the narrator think the myth-structure as he recounts the myth, or the scientist the *episteme* when he thinks scientifically. The analyst of language, of myth, or of science can, of course, entertain these structures in consciousness, but he does so by virtue of a meta-language whose structure itself remains unconscious to him as he speaks the structure of another language. Structuralist research, then, as Lévi-Strauss has agreed (willingly accepting what was originally intended as a criticism), is a kind of Kantianism without a transcendental subject, for whatever one thinks (be it content or structure) there is always another meta-structure which thinks *him,* i.e., which provides the conditions and limits of the possibility of his thought. The quest, at its broadest point, is for the natural laws of the human mind, or the conditions of the possibility of *making sense.*

The object of the structuralists is located in a particular area, which is neither that of the empirical nor that of the general concept, but of that which mediates between them. It is in this area that the *structure* lies, as is most clearly seen in Lévi-Strauss and Foucault. But the same attempt to illuminate this mediation can be seen both in Barthes' idea of *écriture* and in Althusser's concept of the *problematic.* It results in each case that the object produced is, in its significant reality, no more than the conditions of the possibility of its production. This is, of course, not to deny that the product has a materiality and is brought to actuality by a subject who experiences a particular affective quality in this activity; but neither the materiality nor the experienced activity have a signification in themselves. Thus when Lévi-Strauss analyses the structure of food mythology, he by no means denies that the food people eat also nourishes them and tastes good or bad to them. But they might be nourished by an indefinite number of foods and combinations of foods which do not fall within their

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culinary system. Out of this indefinite range of biologically possible foods and manners of cooking them, each culture selects a certain limited range which it places in certain determinate relations of agreement and opposition to one another (as out of the indefinite range of possible human sounds each language employs a limited number of mutually distinguishable phonemes) such that its culinary system takes on a signification for it. The biological reality of nourishment thus forms the undifferentiated materiality which is broken up and structured so that it has an immediately perceived sense for him who participates in the system. The subject, then, becomes, not the creator or possessor of meaning, but the object of the structure which alone provides all his possibilities of meaning.

The assumptions involved here are not as gratuitous as some of the anti-structuralist critics would make them appear, but rather the search for the structure behind the discourse (of whatever kind: mythic, philosophical, literary, psychoanalytic) seems to be imposed by the discontinuity of the discourse itself. Thus Lacan defines the unconscious as "that chapter of my history which is marked by a blank or occupied by a lie; it is the censored chapter. But the truth can be found; most often it is written elsewhere." The most obvious example of this discontinuity is the dream which, perfectly coherent for the dreamer, appears radically discontinuous in the recounting; for the principle of its continuity lies elsewhere, in the unconscious. The myth, too, as recounted by the native narrator, includes gaping holes or discontinuities, as does the scientific discourse of a period, the literature of Racine, and the economic discourse of Adam Smith. Yet these gaps do not bother the subject (individual or social) of the discourse, precisely because he *lives* the structure of the discourse which provides the underlying coherence of its discontinuous surface. The subject lives in the structure and the blanks in his discourse do not trouble him just so long as he continues to do so. But once he moves outside of it (like the neurotic, who lives outside of himself, in the other) the blanks in his history or his discourse become incomprehensible to him. Thus the task of the psychoanalyst, according to Lacan, is to restore to the patient the lost continuity of his history, that of Marx, for Althusser, to restore the continuity of the discourse of classical economics; the same

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holds for Lévi-Strauss, Barthes and Foucault with regard to myth, literature, and the thought of an historical period. It is the fact that none of these discourses, viewed from the exterior, is complete (though it is so in the affective experience of its subject) that imposes the structuralist's task: that of unearthing the system of laws by which one gets from one part of the discourse to another, which in turn reveals the true aim of the system.

Structuralism, then, as Lévi-Strauss has amply emphasized, is pre-eminently thought from without. And it is just this neglect of the subject which has been the beginning and the end of most criticism of the approach. But it must be admitted that the "neglect" is not oversight but intention: the structuralist analyst has no desire simply to *experience* the continuousness of the discourse, but to *know* in what it consists. One may either enter into the object of interest empathetically, live its significations unreflectively, or one may attempt to discover what it is which gives it those significations and no others; but the two functions cannot be comprehended in the same state of consciousness. *Sense,* according to Lévi-Strauss, is "a particular flavor perceived by a consciousness when it tastes a particular combination of elements, none of which, taken by itself, would offer a comparable flavor." But the ethnologist's job is not to taste the flavors but to discover the combinations which give rise to them (though, he admits, having once reconstructed the conditions of the sense, the ethnologist—being also a man—may offer himself the final satisfaction of tasting it, thus completing his objective proofs by intuition).

The view from inside, the interpretation of the life-world of man's immediately lived experience, which the existential phenomenologists have attempted, never leaves the level of the myth which it studies, but remains always a further variant of that myth. Lévi-Strauss, however, does not claim that the structuralist analysis itself escapes the realm of myth (from which scientific thought differs only relatively). Thus in the introduction to *The Raw and the Cooked* he writes that one would not be wrong in taking the study itself for a myth, in a way the myth of mythology. Hence one does not escape the domain of myth but comprehends the myth-object in a higher or meta-myth which (in Charles Peirce's terminology) serves as its interpretant. Every sign, according to Peirce, who is much invoked by the structuralists, gets its

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meaning by its translation into a further sign which is its interpretant, and the same holds for myth systems. The distinction, for Lévi-Strauss, is not between mythic and non-mythic thought, but between the extension of the myth and the comprehension of it. While contemplation from within any discourse is possible, it never constitutes an elucidation of that discourse, never fills its gaps, but is merely a continuation of it. Thus what at first appears as a possibility of complementarity between the two approaches, rapidly recedes. While Merleau-Ponty, a close friend of both Lévi-Strauss and of Lacan, was quite receptive to their structuralist thinking, they, in retrospect at least, see much less community between their thought and his than Merleau-Ponty believed existed.

The most celebrated critic of structuralism has, of course, been Jean-Paul Sartre, who argues that the theory does away precisely with what is essential to man and to human society: history and *praxis,* the continuous accumulation of experience out of which the present action grows and within which it must be understood. However, in his lively discussion with Lévi-Strauss (as well as, later, with Foucault: "The last barrier that the bourgeoisie can erect against Marx"), it is evident that Sartre employs the terms "history" and "structure" in a sense different from that of the structuralists. Structure, Sartre argues, is merely "a skeleton, the frozen trace of an activity." This, however, is not the sense in which the idea of structure has been developed by the structuralists, for they have constantly emphasized that the structure, far from being a skeleton, is a tightly knit system in which every change introduces an imbalance which brings about an alteration of the totality (or else the destruction of the system). Concerning the question of history, Lévi-Strauss argues against Sartre that history is a particular code in which events are ordered (in this case a chronological code) and has no priority over other sorts of codes. History is not of the essence of man, it does not *contain* man's essential meaning (any more than reality in general contains man's meanings), nor is it a privileged means of access to the understanding of man. History, in fact, is not even continuous, he maintains, for there is no possible continuity between prehistory in terms of dozens or hundreds of millennia, ancient history in terms of millennia, and modern history in

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terms of years, days or hours; but only a discontinuous hierarchical ordering of different codes. Sartre, on the other hand, when he states that "history is not order, it's disorder," is evidentally speaking of lived history and not, like Lévi-Strauss, of the historian's history. Sartre's criticisms, then, while perhaps emotionally (or ideologically) satisfying in the face of the apparent destruction of ultimate human liberty and creativity (both, Foucault maintains, recently inherited from God, upon his death at the time of Nietzsche), largely miss the mark.

Another phenomenologist has also recently entered the ring against structuralism. Mikel Dufrenne, in his philosophical polemic, *Pour l'homme,* attacks structuralist thought as a philosophy of the pure concept which loses sight of men and their real objects. But his placing of philosophies as diverse as those of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Carnap under the same sign as that of structuralism, and the similarity of his criticism of them all, severely reduces the force of his arguments against structuralism in particular. Moreover, the second part of the book, in which Dufrenne attempts to counter the structuralist position (rather than answering the structuralists' objection), really constitutes a restatement of the thesis that the concept is in some way in the thing. Here he grounds his theory upon the notion of an original community of man and the world and a coordinated realization of the two. But this philosophy of community and recognition is precisely what has been attacked, most explicitly by Althusser, as the continuation of a traditional ideology or myth, which puts the answer before the question, rather than setting the problem before the answer. The phenomenologist attempts to run together knowledge and the real, meaning and the world, at the origin (chronological or logical), in such a way that this underlying unity will continue to afford an undivided basis or backdrop as they are progressively extricated and separated from one another, as well as a promise that man's alienation can be ultimately overcome. All the structuralists, on the other hand, in one way or another, make the same point as Althusser: the object of knowledge (speech, myth) and the real object are utterly different from one another. The materiality of the world, the affective quality of direct experience, no matter how they are juggled about, can never constitute meaning; meaning consists wholly in the use of

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ordered systems of signs which, as signs, do not run over into the world but remain specifically distinct from it. Sign systems are closed systems of interrelations which contain their objects (the signified) within them. They are not commanded by the world, but rather command the world, are not collections of labels produced for us by the world or discoverable in it, but are arbitrary in reference to the world (though not in their internal working). The question for the structuralist, if he goes beyond the analysis and comparison of the systems themselves, must be, not how man experiences the unity of his sign systems and his world, but how such self-enclosed systems manage to get a bite upon the world.

Unquestionably the most thoughtful, as well as the most sympathetic and constructive critic of structuralism has been the phenomenologist Paul Ricoeur. Granting a considerable area of validity to the structuralist analysis, he nevertheless argues that it cannot cover the ground by itself, and hopes to show where its limits lie and what it excludes. Eschewing the broad concepts of the *life-world* and *praxis,* Ricoeur concerns himself primarily with symbols and the science of their interpretation, or hermeneutics. The *sign,* as Ricoeur defines it, is something which, by its sensible quality (the signifier), expresses a meaning (the signified), and thanks to its meaning, *designates* something (the object). A *symbol,* on the other hand, is the location of multiple senses, superimposing itself upon the sign as a relation of *sense to sense.* It thus presupposes signs, which have a primary, literal, manifest sense and by which this sense is referred to another sense. There is a symbol, says Ricoeur, when language produces signs of a composite degree in which the sense, not satisfied to designate something, designates another sense. The science of symbols is *interpretation,* but interpretation, for Ricoeur, is not necessarily a reflective activity. It is the symbol itself which sets interpretation in motion, and whoever apprehends a symbol at all, whoever naively aims at another sense by means of a manifest sense, is already on the path of interpretation, by virtue of the transgression of one sense by another. Thus Ricoeur seems quite willing to accept the proposition of Lévi-Strauss, that his activity of interpretation is a continuation of the symbolic discourse (myth) rather than a comprehension of it in a higher system. But, he argues, this is a necessary complement to the study of structure,

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and in fact connects with it at a point which he attempts to define.

Taking the question back to its linguistic origins, Ricoeur maintains that the point of contact between structure (*langue*) and event (*parole*) is the *word*. The word is defined as the sign as it is uttered in discourse (*en position de parole*), while the sign itself is simply the internal relation of a signifier and a signified, and a differential relation with other unities in the system. This two-faced word-sign, Ricoeur contends, is the point of exchange between the linguistic structure and the linguistic event. The smallest unit of discourse, that is, the smallest unit which intends to say something, is the sentence. The sentence, however, is an event, and hence is transitory and vanishing; but the word, as the mobile element of the sentence, survives its transitory existence and remains available for new employments. Moreover, the word takes on new values from its uses in various sentences and, rich with these values, it returns to the system, and in doing so, gives it a history. The multiplicity of meanings accumulated from its use in the sentence, the overdetermination of the word, is projected back onto the synchronic surface of the system as polysemy, the possession of a plurality of significations by a single signifier in the same state of the system.

All words, then, are finally symbols for Ricoeur, that is cumulative linguistic entities having a multiplicity of senses. But the tendency of the word to expand cumulatively is limited in the interior of the system by the mutual oppositions of signs to one another. Thus, Ricoeur concludes: "A ruled polysemy is the law of our language."

The structuralist approach, as it exists at present, leaves far too many unanswered questions to be considered a final word, and most of the structuralists, when they are not involved in bitter polemics, admit this. But it is performing a large service in clearing the ground of a complex of persistent "common-sense" notions (often having their ultimate, though hidden, ground in religion, morality, or politics) concerning the relations of man's various types of discourse to his world, in a manner similar to that in which the almost exclusive emphasis on syntax in linguistics, which reigned until quite recently, helped to clear the terrain of numerous naive, but not innocent, beliefs about language. Ricoeur's approach, coupled with the revival of a purged semantics,

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after a period of relative disrepute in linguistics, seems to offer the most promising possibility of balancing the syntactic bias of structuralism and of completing its theories in a satisfactory way.

Finally, having considered structuralism in general, and in the particular characters of its leading exponents, we must ask whether there is really agreement among them on basic principles. There is, as we have seen, considerable similarity in the concept of myth for Lévi-Strauss and Barthes, that of ideology for Althusser, and of science (or thought in general) for Foucault. The similarity lies in the fact that each is a second system built upon a primary system, the signs of which form the latent content of the former, limit its possibilities, and prefigure or pre-form what it can deliver. All of them call for an immediate recognition, rather than a process of acquisition, because, as Lévi-Strauss says of primitive thought, the question is not of efficacy but of whether certain things can be made to "go together," which is a question of immediate perception, and not of the progressive acquisition of results. But what "goes together" and what does not is not a function of nature but of the primary system of signification upon which the second is built. So, as Foucault has shown most clearly, what "goes together" for one culture or period does not go together at all for another; what "goes together" for the Renaissance is inconceivable for the Enlightenment. The second system is thus commanded by the first, the system of contingency, which becomes the latent content of the second, immobilized system, immobilized precisely because what is signified in it are not concepts but signs; its signifiers do not aim at the world by means of a set of concepts constructed in order to elucidate it, but rather they aim at the already formulated sense of the first system which forms their latent content, thus getting out of the system exactly what has been put in. In a now famous passage of *The Savage Mind,* Lévi-Strauss defines mythic thought as a sort of intellectual *bricolage*. Now the characteristic of the *bricoleur* is that he uses as his means odds and ends originally intended for other purposes, which he turns to his own uses; he does the best he can with what is available to him, while the engineer subordinates each of his tasks to the obtaining of the necessary primary materials and tools, conceived and procured according to his project. "But," says Lévi-Strauss, "the characteristic of mythic thought is to express itself

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with the help of a repertory whose composition is heteroclite, and which, although extensive, nevertheless remains limited. Therefore, it must make use of it, whatever the task it assigns itself may be, for it has nothing else at hand." Since the materials which primitive thought uses for its mythic constructions are borrowed from language, in which they already possess a sense which limits their mobility, the elements collected and utilized by primitive thought are, says Lévi-Strauss, "preconstrained." The messages, the senses, that the primitive seeks in his myths are in a way "pre-transmitted."

As we have seen, Barthes is largely in accord with this definition of myth. Furthermore, this idea of the pre-transmission or prefiguration of the sense is also present in Althusser's conception of ideology, and in science in general for Foucault. But at this point we come to the parting of the ways (though a similarity of terminology tends to mask differences in conception), and may raise the question whether there is really one structuralism or two? For Lévi-Strauss the difference between primitive, or mythic thought, and science is strictly relative. The latter, to be sure, succeeds better than the former, but, says Lévi-Strauss, primitive thought and science do not differ by the kind of mental operations they presuppose but rather by the types of phenomena to which they are applied. The primitive interrogates a sub-totality of the culture which already possesses a certain limited sense and thus the answers he can obtain are pre-formed; the scientist, on the other hand, supposedly interrogates nature. But the distinction, Lévi-Strauss maintains, is not so absolute as one might imagine, for "the scientist never dialogues with pure nature, but with a certain state of the relation between nature and culture, definable by the period of history in which he lives, the civilization which is his, and the material means of which he disposes. Placed before a given task, he is not free, any more than the *bricoleur,* to do just anything; he too must begin by inventorying a predetermined ensemble of theoretical and practical knowledge and of practical means, which limit the possible solutions." Mythic thought and scientific thought are not related as two stages, or two phases of the evolution of thought, for, he claims, both procedures are equally valid.

It is this position—that the scientist interrogates a certain state

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of the relation between nature and culture, or between things and signs—which Foucault pushes to the extreme in contending that all scientific and other domains of thought in an epoch are reflections of the reigning *episteme* which predetermines the questions that it can ask and the answers that it can give to them; nor do alterations in scientific thought signify an increase in our understanding of the world (every epoch, it could be said, understands the world perfectly), but a change in the *episteme*. Now myth is defined by Barthes in the same terms as Lévi-Strauss, and ideology by Althusser in the same terms as science for Foucault. But the attitudes of Barthes and Althusser toward these phenomena are quite different. They are, in their eyes, evils—necessary ones perhaps, but still evils—thus presupposing the existence of another discourse which would not, like that of myth or ideology, merely redouble the sense already contained in the conditions of its existence, but would, in some way, be a language of the real. The emphasis in both on how a self-enclosed system of signs (literature or scientific theory) appropriates the world, indicates that their ends are ultimately more semantic than syntactic, the structural approach functioning for them as an instrument of de-mythologizing and de-ideologizing. The task of myth, as of ideology, is to signify meaning, to show that things are meaningful (even if not what they mean). Myth or ideology enable man (either primitive or modern) to read (or think that he reads) a significant discourse out of the world itself. But knowledge, for Althusser and for Barthes, is not knowing what things mean, but how they operate, and there is no continuity between the two. Myth and ideology are insidious, for them, precisely because the idea that things have inherent meanings essentializes and immobilizes the world, and discourages the search for the mechanisms of things, and the discourse which would express them, before it begins. Thus myth and ideology are associated by them with the theologically founded thought of the anti-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which it has been the job of most philosophy and literature since the mid-seventeenth century to confirm in its universal and necessary existence.

In fact, Barthes remains much closer to the existential-phenomenological position than Lévi-Strauss or Foucault, giving more place than they to situational meaning—the signification taken on

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by unities due to their situation in a discourse—alongside of structural meaning, while his conception of literary discourse is almost identical with Ricoeur's definition of symbolic discourse—an overdetermined system, relating sense to sense, but open rather than closed upon itself like the myth.

The much heralded disappearance of man, the emblem under which structuralism exists today in France, should appear, after the foregoing, a less than fearful prospect. For if man is on the way to extinction, it is "theological man," man full of essential meaning, who is departing—which, indeed, represents no great loss. This flamboyant, and finally empty slogan, should not be allowed to blind us to the fact that structuralism is a valuable philosophical approach, despite its not inconsiderable ambiguities. For, after all, what constitutes a form of thought or discourse as valid, is not the fact that it answers, once and for all, all the important questions. No philosophy has yet succeeded in doing so satisfactorily and it is scarcely to be expected that tomorrow we shall fall upon one which does. It is rather that from a central point of reference it orders and orients all the important problems and makes them comprehensible (though still as problems), provides a framework for research and a structure in which life in its diversity can be given some coherent sense.

No structure is eternal, none is rooted in the necessary nature of things; systems of sense are constructions and, like primitive myths, often brittle and prone to disintegration, and so require a continual process of reconstruction. Just as structural man, says Barthes, experiences the validity (but not the truth) of structuralism in his power to speak the ancient languages of the world in a new way, "so, too, he knows that the emergence from history of a new language which speaks him in its turn, will suffice to terminate his task." If there is a moral of structuralism, it is that, since sense is a construction, and not an inherent component of the world—such that we could rest calm in our assurance that *good* sense will necessarily out—we must be on constant guard against allowing our right to make sense to be appropriated definitively by others; that we must heed not only the substance of things in its immediacy (which is the road to political, social, and moral deception), but the direction of their sense as determined by the systems in which they are engaged.

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VERNON YOUNG

Film Chronicle: Notes on the Compulsive Revolution

> Do we not have a society in which we see the attrition of law and national wisdom and general craft? Do we not have an age anti-intellectual and violent, *in which there is felt a kind of total responsibility to total disorder?* Who looks ahead except to a panacea or a *millennium which is interchangeable with an invoked anarchy,* whether in the world or in the individual personality? Do we not above all each day wonderfully improve our chances of misunderstanding each other? . . .
>
> —R. P. Blackmur, "A Burden for Critics," 1948.

I HAVE LONG ENTERTAINED the suspicion, which I have tried to conceal behind a mask of professional courtesy (not altogether successfully, I am given to understand), that the film director is the affluent ape in the jungle of modern art. Since I have not read Wolfgang Köhler for some years, I can't recall if he claimed that the ape typically suffered from loneliness. The film director does, that's for sure. He can't bear not to be doing what all the other little beasts are doing: hunting someone else's fleas, wearing women's hats, swinging from tree to tree just to prove his equality with the gibbon, masturbating for the audience as a reminder of the "reality" which its vaunted evolution in vain attempts to deny. Everybody (in these circles) wants to get into the act—the same act. About seven years ago, nine out of every ten films, long or short, ended with an immobile shot, Kodak-as-you-go, and usually included a sequence of jump-cutting in space and much chronology-shuffling in time. A few years later came the libidinal revolution; we were emancipated; in no time at all we were permitted not only to hear but to see the vocabulary of copulation in all its diversity, not excluding sodomy, fellatio or cunnilingus. That's as far as my exposure has taken me but I'm not deluded that there's relief in sight. "The worst is not yet, while we can say, 'This is the worst'." Unmercifully, these phases have not passed, one after the other; they have overlapped and are now interlocked with the fad of being politically subversive. The paradigmatic film of the day is one in which what happens when is never self-evident; only the blame for it is simple to locate. Epilepsy at the cutting-table is not enough; one must protest about something, and the most available something is the whole system of check and balance which has provided this frenzy of permissiveness to begin with.

Charley. Remember it, from the backward reaches of 1968? A

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lovable moron upgraded by scientific experiment? A fantasy with a grim touch of probability and an ambience of pathos: that was the tone required. But *social accusation* had become *chic;* the producers, groping for the Oscar, must incorporate social accusation. When Charley faces a panel of biologists and shrinkers to display his intellectual progress, he launches abruptly into a denunciation of the social drift as he has learned to see it, with his newly conditioned eyes: *more computerization, more hate, more wars, more education by TV;* the familiar charges and by no means impertinent, but nothing heretofore in the pragmatic nature of Charley's observations has prepared us for this outburst. Whenever we've seen him, he was memorizing equations with no pain and amorously pursuing Claire Bloom in the green-belts of Cambridge. When did he have *time* to speculate darkly on the accelerating contradictions of man? And how do they concern *his* success story except—and his discovery was crudely planted—as a form of suspicion that he has been tampered with for the prestige of science and might better have been content with a low IQ in the first place? The confusions in this film were prodigal and basic; before the compulsive attack on the organization man was inserted, the development of Charley's do-it-yourself capacity had been run in parallel with America's coming-of-age, assisted by copious reference to the War of Independence and by guided tours of memorials to that event in Boston and vicinity. One might suppose that emergence from a state of imbecility was not the most fortunate analogy for the productive growth of the nation! Or should we have inferred that America, like Charley, was animate solely by virtue of a technological shot in the arm and would shortly regress to a subsocial level of proficiency? . . . Too many cooks is my guess, trying simultaneously to butter up the progressives, the institutional patriots, the pre-Med faculty, the Dropouts and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The Loves of Isadora. According to the film, Isadora Duncan the person, whatever contribution she made to modern dance (the nature of that contribution is still unclear to me), was obviously an idiot who euphemized her concupiscence, her greed and her benevolent egoism with yards of Greek hymatian and a flow of milked-from-Shelley gush about truth, beauty and revolution. As in many films, the convoluted montage is made to do duty as interpretation, yet it seems clear that Karel Reisz could not have intended to glorify her (to celebrate her, that's something else, and to use her as a mouthpiece for his flirtation with Moscow), but it is equally clear that critics (male or female) who are in love with Vanessa Redgrave take the apparition she portrays (splendidly) with some degree of seriousness—no doubt because Reisz has supplied her with an erotic gamut to go with the times (our times) and heaps of Style Nouveau

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and Loire Chateau decors in which to exercise it; for a surprising number of people Sybaris is still the capital of the Life in Art. So it was for Isadora; hence, she could afford radicalism, like a movie director. "All artists are revolutionary," she rants, comprehending *nothing* about revolution, politics or the cavernous mind of man. (A pre-Raphaelite hippie, that's the term I'm groping for.) The Boston episode is a large handful of Reisz, a front behind which Isadora may shout his message at the audience (in the cinema). Following a riot that empties the theatre, "We Americans used to be wild!" she pleads. *"Don't let them tame you!"* I have news for Mr. Reisz. There is no danger.

Z. That's a film title: of that daring revolutionary number which took a prize (excuse my yawn) at Cannes last year, made in Paris by a Greek-letter fraternity in which Yves Montand, Jean-Louis Trintignant and Jacques Perrin were conspicuous. If the Cause wouldn't bring them to the box-office, the cast would. As a guarantee of authenticity, the director was Greek and Irene Papas played Zetta's grieving wife (unfortunately, her sustained silence was too patently a device for avoiding the language barrier to be wholly convincing). Regarding the political issue: there may well be times in history when every member of a regime you despise is a pig by any human definition; there is never a time when the opposition is totally composed of genially subversive heroes. In any case, it makes for crude drama to assume so and certainly makes it easy for the script writer, the director, the sales division and those who went to the movie to fan the hate they had already documented. There's some incidental, ferocious action in the film and a number of weird bit players who were diverting in themselves; all told, though, I found the ordinating conduct of things unreal. The director was facetiously eager to evoke predictable responses. And as much as I do like Jacques Perrin and Trintignant I don't buy them as Greeks. The reporter, clad in summer whites, who smiles sweetly and pushes the hair off his forehead: this must be the silliest conception since Paul Henreid, also wearing an immaculate linen suit, sauntered through Casablanca as a leader of the French underground. Montand, who walks like a waiter, I couldn't accept, either, as the inscrutable "Z" who is reputed to have survived a lethal clout on the head and to be hibernating somewhere, like Barbarossa, until the hour when, summoned by his followers, he will be resurrected and lead to victory all those good people who will live democratically ever after, playing *Never on Sunday* for liberal tourists.

If. (We're up to two letters in the title!) Lindsay Anderson, whose best work in the past *(O Dreamland,* a short, and *This Sporting Life)* had seemingly been motivated by pity, now joins with his

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many countrymen in the area of social cinema who are more than anything else guided by class hatred. It was whispered to me that the black-and-white scenes in this film, about a dreamed revolt in an English preparatory school, were fantasy, those in colour, reality; however, I could make out no sense from following this clue, nor could I find any consistency by reversing the description. I think that the device, together with his subtitles like chapter heads (tiredly reminiscent of the French Old Wave), was direct evidence of Anderson's uncertainty. He wanted to make a straight I-hate-England film and at the same time needed to pay his respects to the sophisticated knacks which are all the go. I don't know what to say about the conditions imputed to the school represented in *If*. When I was in an English boarding school in the Twenties, cruelty to "fags" had been outlawed years gone by, as a consequence, we were all taught, of Thomas Hughes' reforming novel, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. If such a school as Anderson depicts does survive it is scarcely typical, which of course does not exempt it from attack, though it does invalidate it for the more sweeping purpose Anderson had in mind.

I thought the first half, more or less, was funny, exact and nasty in the way of Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall*—the barbarous rites, the articulate hostility, the dreary poetics of homosexual yearning. I could all but smell the urinals. The more Anderson underlined, the more incoherent he became. By now we've seen so many oblivious headmasters, sunset colonels, snobbish prefects and pneumatic matrons (Alec Guiness has played most of them) that it takes a great deal more invention than Anderson displayed to get a laugh or a corroborative sneer from me. To shift from this level of wincing to dreams of mowing down with a machine-gun the whole social brigade alleged to condone brutality (simply not true) is to move from justifiable indignation to hysteria and terrorism. (Even Peter Watkins thought Anderson had gone too far!) They loved it at the Cannes Festival, though. And the comment made to me by an approving Swedish female may, for all I know, typify the universal reception. Looking me straight in the eye she said brightly, "It certainly makes one understand why the English are so arrogant and stupid." I consoled myself with the belief that she had Mr. Lindsay Anderson in mind.

Ädalen 31. Naturally, the Swedes, those born non-participants, would be foremost in asserting how vexed they are by social injustice, the more so if its victims are a thousand miles away or have been a long time dead. Bo Widerberg has been scouring Sweden to find something about which he can be outraged and make a documentary. He found something last year—the huffing and puffing that took place at Bostad when the South Africans were invited to play tennis and were then uninvited by a demonstration and the police tried to

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maintain order. You don't want to know the details—this is small-town stuff. The disturbance in Ådalen, 1931, was about as important in the annals of labor-and-capital strife. The program was classical: a strike was called, the company called up strike-breakers from Stockholm, the Ådalen workers dumped them into the harbor, then marched in protest; they were blocked by a small cavalry contingent, threw rocks at the riders (this was omitted in the film) and the rattled military opened fire. Five workers were killed, two by ricochetting bullets.

While we can agree that tragedy is not governed by quantitative measure, we can insist that in moviemaking the important thing is whether or not something vital was made of an encounter and, further, if we experience more than meets the eye. Something pretty was made of Ådalen, let's say that: there was more nostalgia than grapes of wrath. Symbols and antitheses abound, in the manner of the silent Soviet and UFA films: lilac and guns, sunshine and shadow, pregnancy and death. Every working-class character is pure and rural; the "capitalists" are epitomized in one round-table scene, all cigars, indifference and telephones. The mother of the girl with whom the working-class lad is in love introduces him to the art of Renoir, so that Widerberg can point up his effort to reproduce Renoir scenically, even to the plump-cheeked girl with her hair tied back; when Mother takes the girl to an abortionist rather than have plebeian blood in the family (I find this incredible) and the boy's father is shot by the cossacks, Renoir can then be rejected as an upper-class possession. (You can't say Widerberg's reach doesn't exceed his grasp. He'll go to Heaven.) There are furlongs of domestic chores, sex and dancing, all of which made time pass slowly and seemed strangely fake-pastoral to me. A revolutionary film? Lord love the man, he's a paper tiger. He filmed a collision and only the physical climax was at all effective —the long line of marchers in the spring sunlight, the mounted men more fearful than fearsome, the rearing, reluctant horses. Of the real, intricate and rooted enmities that prepare such an incident there is no consciousness. Widerberg scowls and growls, like the urchins in those *Small Fry* cartoons of Steig, trying to scare hell out of each other, never realizing that his pink-and-blue films repudiate his grimaces. At the end of this one, his child (one is in every film he makes, like Alfred Hitchcock in his)—there's this child, blowing soap-bubbles in the garden. Life goes on sort-of-thing. This says it for Widerberg: a soap-bubble dreaming it's an angry man.

Easy Rider. Like most American films, it is easier to enjoy if you don't question what certain of my friends would call its *moralische bedeutung,* which I take to be the conviction that in the U.S.A. Dionysus is doomed to be destroyed by Apollo. I would have been more impressed (I *was* impressed by the confidence, the style and the

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fluency) if I had not to accept the narcotic peddler, the lush and the problem child[1] as symbols of a defeated will to insurgence. Bill, the longhair junky, replies to the whore who endearingly calls him a freak: "I never thought of myself as a freak." In truth he is a freak: he is so, calculatedly, he works at it, his idiom is contrived to screen out all other linguistic responses, he dresses freak; the sickest thing about him generically is that he doesn't believe he can be described generically, yet there's a mob of him who share his coded vocabulary, his narcissism, his sloppy morality—and his smell. Sidekick, Captain America, played with warm cool by Peter Fonda (true son of his adept father) is the eternal American innocent (Natty Bumpo burned out young, Billy Budd as a pusher) who combines infinite kindness towards a world he never made, and will never begin to understand, with a heedless affection for the gummy side of the law. And the charm with which Jack Nicholson plays the young Texas lawyer who toasts D. H. Lawrence, dons a football helmet and drops out into violent death need not blind us to the fact that we're being offered that infantile American alternative—"Either I'm made null and void by Daddy or I take to the bottle and the road." Mind in America cannot be brought to initiate civilised alternatives: the drift is always out and down, a direction in which space itself conspires. So it is entirely fitting that these cycling junkies should speed their appointed highway to extinction across the ravishing mindless plateau of the Southwest, America's Egdon Heath—volcanic plugs, mesas that look like altars for gods who never showed up. (I lived in that country for years and could never decide whether it looked more like the end of everything or the dawn of everything.) The post-frontier neurosis—"Lie to us! Dance us back our tribal morn!"—receives perhaps unintentional travesty in that scene among the Hippies of Sacred Mountain, wearing the shreds of whatever cultural memory they condescend to retain: Ikhnaton, Mary Magdalene, Francis of Assisi, Wild Bill Hickock. Left to itself, the erased mind is powerless: refusing the rational content of its culture it is driven to supplying itself from the beach-heads of Camp or the imagery of drug-induced hallucinations. And if Jung is right about the racial sub-consciousness, not there can it escape the eternal return of someone else's cultural storage.

The Idiot (BBC). In a review of Dostoievsky's notebooks for *The Idiot* (in *The New Yorker,* October 5, 1968), Harold Rosenberg described Myshkin as, among other things, "the original of those who seek to persuade through self-renunciation [like the] flower children of the 1960's convinced of the perfidiousness of the adult mind." Mr. Rosenberg's essay is brilliant but I found this single comparison quite

[1] Someone in the authoritative profession, whose name now escapes me, was quoted in a recent issue of *Encounter,* to the effect that we are witnessing a revolution by the first generation that was picked up when it cried.

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incomprehensible. Myshkin was an aristocrat with a thirst for purity, heightened unnaturally by epilepsy who, insofar as he felt a social allegiance, was wistfully in bond to the flagging established order. Remember the conclusion of his prophetic tirade at Aglaya's party: "You think that I was afraid for the *others,* that I am *their* advocate, a democrat, an upholder of equality?" (He laughs hysterically) . . . "I am afraid for you, for all of you, and for all of us. For I am a prince of ancient lineage myself, and I'm sitting among princes. I am saying this to save you all, so as to prevent our class from vanishing for nothing into utter darkness. . . ."[2] Dostoievsky has been claimed by many factions; perhaps with more justification, from their perspective, by the anti-liberals in pre-Hitler Germany than by the present generation of juveniles which, whether or not it's aware of the fact, is suffering from the invertebrate liberalism of the last forty years and more closely resembles the creature against whom Dostoievsky posted his most profound warning: in a word, Smerdiakov. For do we not see this Smerdiakov everywhere today? Smerdiakov again confronting Ivan, and whining: "Everything is permissible! *You taught me that!*"

I was fortunate to see, soon after reading Rosenberg, a fabulous production of *The Idiot* from the BBC television, an experience I owe to that "harmonizing pluralism" of our system, held in such contempt by Herbert Marcuse, "where the most contradictory works and truths peacefully coexist in indifference." I'd like to say a few words about the occasion here because this was film creation of a rare, dedicated order in these days when most films for the cinema are made by nervous whores and are about Goths. The adaptation by Leo Lehman (he's Polish, actually) was presented in five episodes of about fifty minutes each and after every one I was left shaken, if enriched, and I'll freely confess, lachrymose. Here was simply that deep, exciting revelation which film can be when its content is at the same time rich in social texture, unsparing in its compassion and ruthless in its reminder that, to be sure, the unexamined life is *not* worth living. The direction (Alan Bridges) was masterfully baroque: by which I mean that the rhythms and the metaphysical suspense seemed always threatening to burst the limits of the space and duration to which they were confined. The actors were marvellous, above all David Buck as Myshkin and Anthony Bate as Rogozhin. (All these names were unfamiliar to me.)[3] But the ruling hero of this

[2] My quotations are from the David Magarshack translation of *The Idiot* (Penguin Books).

[3] That English actors have an inexplicable talent for interpreting Russian characters was established by the Redgrave-Olivier production of *Uncle Vanya* (among the great theatre experiences of my lifetime) and confirmed by the recent film version of *The Sea Gull,* even though *as a film* it was bad, bad, bad—Sidney Lumet discovered no interesting cinematic form for the original play; the actors, however, were, in their feeling, authentically reminiscent, intensely personal and disturbing.

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enterprise was Leo Lehman, the scenarist. Recall that fantastic party when Nastasya is supposed to accept Ganya's proposal; Myshkin is there and Rogozhin arrives drunk, loaded with money, expecting to buy Nastasya; the rooms are swirling with social cross-currents, rash confessions, naked spite. After a tormenting crescendo, during which Nastasya has resolved to marry Myshkin, thrown Rogozhin's money in the fire to test the cupidity of Ganya, who faints after this ordeal—and a world of subordinate reminiscences and plots have intervened—she, Nastasya, suddenly rushes from the party and from everybody, forever, dragging with her—Rogozhin! Pausing at the door to survey the devastation she has left behind, she throws over her shoulder, by way of self-explanation, the line, "There *are* such people!" . . . I screamed with delight: "That great Dostoievsky! What an amazing line! And how inspired of Lehman to leave it in the script!" He was more inspired than I then knew, for upon returning later to the novel I discovered that Nastasya said no such thing! She should have done, but she didn't.

One instance more of Lehman's creative adaptation. When Myshkin tries to elaborate his feelings about capital punishment for the Yepanchin girls, their thoughts are obviously on another subject. They all but dismiss his gravity by chirping, "Yes, well, now tell us how you were in love." He hesitates, then replies: "I have not been in love. I—was happy in a different way." Now, in the novel, this extraordinary statement is a preface to his long chronicle of the girl, Marie, whom he had defended from persecution in a Swiss village. Since Lehman could no easier include this narrative than many others in the book, it had to go. But miraculously he left that mysterious remark in the continuity, and there it beautifully hung, incandescent and unexplained, much more like an inconclusion of Chekhov, teasing one for days thereafter with its haunting ambiguity . . . "I was happy in a different way."

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STEPHEN FARBER

Film Chronicle

Oh! What A Lovely War is incredibly remote from American experience, but it may have an almost ritualistic meaning to British audiences steeped in the lore and mythology of the Great War. Richard Attenborough's film of Joan Littlewood's stage revue is certainly too portentous to be understood as a mere movie—it's more like a coronation or a state funeral. The irony is that the Littlewood show had the very opposite intention; it was a brazen, irreverent mockery of patriotic platitudes and official cant, a series of improvisatory sketches that lightly but sharply undermined sentimentalization of the First World War. The film has retained the anti-war "message" of the stage revue, but has lost its subversive energy. I have the feeling that an anti-war movie shouldn't be this inoffensive. The film takes the sting out of the show and replaces it with the most lavish, expensive "production values" and the biggest all-star cast (every British actor of note—Olivier, Gielgud, the Redgraves, etc.) since *The Greatest Story Ever Told.*

The anarchic tone is crucial to the success of *Oh! What A Lovely War,* because its material is very thin, almost trivial. There is really only one ironic point to all of the stylized sketches—the disparity between the glamorous fantasies of war heroism encouraged by the upper classes at home, and the horrible sacrifices of the predominantly working class soldiers at the front. At the very beginning some of the visual conceits seem ingenious: Enlistment is imagined as enthusiastic English families buying tickets for World War One at carnival booths set up on Brighton Pier. But the scenes that follow only belabor the same facile irony—a music hall performer enticing the boys to the front lines by promising sexual treats if they do their country proud, a giant, decorative carousel that represents the heroic fantasy of the Battle of Belgium, a scoreboard that lists the hundreds of thousands killed at the Battle of the Somme as if recording the results of a soccer match. Again and again the film means to shock us by cutting from these extravagant fantasy images of war to more somber scenes (very static, often mawkish) of the soldiers suffering in the trenches. But how much can this dogged intercutting reveal? Most of us catch on the first time.

All that saved this rather banal and didactic material on the stage was the vitality, the impudence, the plain joyousness of the performance. But the spontaneity is gone; the film has become a spectacular. The actors walk through their cameo roles as if performing a sacred obligation to the Empire. Everything is so stately, so ceremonial, so dead. When every new set is unveiled, you hear

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oohs and ahs from the audience, just as you would at a lush Broadway musical. After the first couple of mountings, I began to resent all the beauty. The very last shot has already been highly praised, but for me it exemplifies what is wrong with the film's imagery. The women of the Smith family (our Average English Family) are walking through the cemetery where their male relatives are buried. In one amazingly long helicopter shot the camera pulls further and further away from them, until finally we are looking down from high above the earth, and all that we can see beneath us are thousands and thousands of tiny white crosses, stretching out in all directions, that represent the untimely death of a generation. It's an incredibly "impressive" shot, but it goes on so long that you become more and more conscious of the director *trying* to impress you, congratulating himself on his brilliance. Then it goes on still longer and you begin to wonder how they actually composed the shot, how they found so many freshly-painted white crosses and planted them all in such symmetrical order, and the sheer logistics of it begin to seem overwhelming indeed. But of course that destroys the intended sense of loss and melancholy; the shot is such a stunning "effect"—such a triumph of movie technology—that its meaning begins to seem insignificant in comparison with the heavy labor involved. But it would be wrong to say that *Oh! What A Lovely War* represents a triumph of style over substance. Style involves a sense of proportion, delicacy, grace; the "dazzling" compositions for this movie are cold technical marvels—more like city planning than art. There is never a feeling of exuberant *human* imagination in the film's visual style—just as there is no relish in the performances.

Everything in the film is too big, every scene is about three times too long; this may be my fancy, but I'd swear the people even *move* too slowly. The movie is getting good reviews, probably because it's slightly intimidating—so much hard work went into it, so many good intentions, so much seriousness and care that you feel you almost *have* to respect it. Attacking it would be sort of like farting in Westminster Abbey. There are good moments in *Oh! What A Lovely War,* but even they sink under the weight of the "prestige" treatment. The leaden solemnity of this film is the absolute antithesis of any quality that I have ever associated with genuine art.

At an opposite extreme, and equally disastrous, is another eagerly-awaited "big" picture, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,* which must be the ultimate in movie frivolousness. Lots of frivolous movies have always been made in Hollywood, but they are usually unself-conscious. What is really offensive about this film is the way it *flaunts* its frivolousness, brays that the frivolousness is what makes it a breakthrough in film art. And people are deferential. William Goldman's rotten screenplay has already been *published*—an honor usually reserved for Antonioni, Bergman, Godard.

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Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were two outlaws in the West at the turn of the century, who left America when they felt the frontier was closing, and died on the run in Bolivia. I suppose what drew Goldman to the material was the sense that these men were the *last* Western bandits, and he probably intended to use them to comment on the radical change in the American land that had begun by 1900. He was certainly stimulated by *Bonnie and Clyde* (to put it kindly—in fact, he steals blatantly from Arthur Penn's film), and not just in specific techniques—the use of old photographs from the period, a slow motion death sequence, comic folk music on the soundtrack to accompany the bank robberies. Goldman seems to want to bathe the outlaws in the same kind of golden romantic haze that Arthur Penn brought to his portrait of Bonnie and Clyde. But in *Bonnie and Clyde* the romantic vision of the outlaw was seriously examined and questioned; in this film it is simply exploited.

Butch Cassidy is spoofy, but it isn't really a spoof. A parody Western like *Support Your Local Sheriff,* trivial as it is, has an honesty about its aims and a consistency of tone that this film lacks. Goldman jokes about the Western outlaw from a contemporary perspective, gives his heroes anachronistically cynical lines, burlesques conventional scenes like seductions and shootouts, but he also plays some of the action straight—it is very dully filmed, incidentally—and he milks our nostalgic feelings about the death of the frontier in flabby lyrical interludes out of *Jules and Jim.* But worst of all, he strains for a few somber tragic scenes to emphasize his integrity—for instance, the scene in which a sheriff gives a passionate speech to Butch and the Kid about the bloody death that is ahead of them, or the moment when Butch kills a man for the first time and then is revolted by the violence. Goldman desperately grabs at any effect he thinks may work at the moment, but most of the time his film plays coy and condescending—so he certainly hasn't earned the right to make a serious comment on violence. The actors are always winking at each other and at us, delighted with their *cool,* eager to let us all in on the joke. Why make a movie for a few wisecracks—throwaway gag lines that are not up to the best of situation comedy—and some pretty nostalgic pictures? The waste in a project like this is what is most appalling—not just a waste of money and time, but more importantly, of talent. Paul Newman and Robert Redford are two of the finest American actors working today, Conrad Hall is one of the most gifted cinematographers, even Goldman and the director, George Roy Hill, who are hardly major artists, have shown reserves of sensitivity and imagination that they never *begin* to tap here. They have all aimed so low; the cuteness of this movie is rather disgusting.

Bonnie and Clyde may be the major influence on *Butch Cassidy,* but the film to which it is really closest in theme is another recent Western, Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch. The Wild Bunch* also

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concerns a group of outlaws who have outlived the frontier and sense that they are becoming anachronisms, who leave America—in this case for Mexico—and are killed while they are pathetically trying to sustain their image. *The Wild Bunch* has been heavily attacked for its violence, and many people actually prefer the slick, jocular tone of *Butch Cassidy* to the more serious, traditional treatment in *The Wild Bunch*. *The Wild Bunch* is a flawed film, a confused one (one moment sentimental about its heroes, the next moment harshly critical of them), but it is personal and genuine; even its confusions attest to a very intense and profound process of self-questioning on Peckinpah's part. He is testing his own assumptions, testing the Western myth itself; he wants to believe in his heroes' masculine code of honor, but he cannot refrain from ruthlessly examining its implications and its consequences. *The Wild Bunch* may make use of a traditional genre, a genre that ordinarily means very little to intelligent moviegoers, but this film *does* mean a great deal, because of Peckinpah's passion and his impatience with cliche. This must be the most painful and searching Western ever made. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* wants to woo us by showing its *superiority* to the Western genre, as if that sign of sophistication were enough to make the film significant. Peckinpah cares about his work, William Goldman and George Roy Hill care only about their image—they want us to know that they're real swingers. And they seem to be disarming the critics and the crowds.

This may be the most hopeful time in the history of American movies, because in the last few months some genuinely unconventional, independently-made, low-budget movies—*Easy Rider, Alice's Restaurant, Medium Cool, Last Summer*—have found large audiences. The success of these movies has totally confused the studios and the banks, and this confusion will make it slightly easier for talented, abrasive film artists to get backing. If a movie like *Butch Cassidy,* a formula comedy with a sham hipness and contemporaneity, is a commerical blockbuster, the safe and the stale will once again be at a premium.

By the same token, when an unfashionable and intelligent film dies at the box office, everyone who cares about good films is hurt. The commerical failure of a few recent fine films (none of them helped very much by the critics) will only make it more difficult for films of this kind to be made in quite this way again. James Ivory, a young American working in India, has made three failures now—*The Householder, Shakespeare Wallah,* most recently *The Guru*—and he cannot get financing for another film. Francis Ford Coppola was able to make *The Rain People* under extraordinary conditions for a Hollywood film: he had a ten-man crew that traveled around the country with him for six months, instead of the gargantuan, unmanageable crews that stifle most American films. He had tremendous difficulties

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with the powerful trade unions in winning this freedom; the fact that the film is a commercial disaster is not going to make it easier for Coppola or other young film-makers to work outside the crippling studio system again. All of this is just a footnote to explain why some commerical consideration of films is not irrelevant to serious film criticism.

Most people don't know it, but *The Rain People* is one of the most interesting American films released this year. Coppola's first film, *You're A Big Boy Now,* was stuffed with technical trickery, and, with a couple of exceptions, had superficial caricature performances. I suspected that Coppola, like many young film-makers, was more concerned about chic visual effects than about people. *The Rain People* is a major step forward for him, a highly uneven film, but a personal one whose modest, intimate framework has stimulated him to an unusual tenderness and compassion in looking at his characters. To the minor bit parts the film is flawlessly cast and performed; and the three major performances, by Shirley Knight, James Caan, and Robert Duvall, represent ensemble acting of a precision still rare in films.

The premise of *The Rain People* has exciting possibilities—a young housewife in New York who has just learned that she is pregnant gets up one morning and, without any clear plan in mind, begins driving across the country alone, convinced only that she must have time to herself, to discover who *she* is, before she decides whether she can devote herself to a family. The opening scenes do a fine, economical job of establishing Natalie's neurotic anxiety in the face of a regimented married life; terse but searing images—Natalie trying to move out from under her husband's arm in bed, then neatly setting out his breakfast before she leaves him—stick in the memory. Her first conversation with her husband over the phone is beautifully written, and beautifully played by Shirley Knight all in one long take; in just a few moments we understand and sympathize with her inarticulate frustration by her marriage responsibilities, her halting desire to find an identity of her own. She slips inadvertently into the third person several times during the conversation—"The married lady just wanted to get away for a while"—and this tells us quite eloquently of her alienation from the domestic role she has been helplessly playing.

But the film lurches out of Coppola's control. He seems to lose his sympathy for Natalie. She begins to show unmotivated moments of cruelty. She picks up a hitch-hiker—a college football player who, it turns out, has a plate in his head from injuries he suffered during a game—determined, as she says, "to make it with somebody new." And suddenly she becomes a lustful, teasing, conniving bitch, particularly in one astonishingly abrupt scene in her motel room where she humiliates the football player like a peremptory, ice-cold goddess, demanding that he bow down before her and service her. The film's

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vision of its heroine wavers between passionate sympathy and terrified hostility, a wavering that seems schizophrenic to say the least. Shirley Knight is brilliant as both the sensitive, troubled woman and the harpy, but even she is unable to persuade us that we are always watching the same character. Her part degenerates into a series of obscure neurotic twitches; it is never really developed and explored. The film does discover several other characters who are barely able to sustain it, but its fascinating initial premise is unrealized and its focus damagingly blurred.

Too much time and sympathy are really spent on the retarded football player Killer. He is handled with surprising dignity, and tastefully played by James Caan, but he is by definition such a simple, unchanging character that he cannot bear all of the attention that Coppola lavishes on him in the second half of the film. Toward the end the film happens on a much richer character, the Nebraska cop (Robert Duvall) with whom Natalie has the sexual experience that she has been seeking from the beginning. In this fine characterization Coppola plays against stereotype; this is the only recent American film that sees the cop not as a monster but as a rather pathetic *victim* of American society—a man not quite overwhelmed by the sordidness of his life, struggling in his own small but honest way to make some order of it. He brings Natalie back to the shabby trailer where he lives, but his young teenage daughter is in the way; the bitter fight between him and the girl, not yet old enough to wear a bra but already bored by the women he brings home, is unnerving. Once he has thrown his daughter out of the trailer, he and Natalie begin making love; the long scene that follows is one of the most interesting sexual scenes yet recorded on film, not because it is more explicit than the others (or even *as* explicit), but because it is one of the first to pay attention to the complex, subtle shifts of emotion that may accompany the sexual act. The cop is thinking about his dead wife, whom he claims to have forgotten; Natalie is depressed by the squalor of his life and by her own aggressiveness. But neither of them is willing to surrender to those feelings of loneliness and self-revulsion, and so they throw themselves with exaggerated, slightly unconvincing passion into their lovemaking. Because this scene humanizes a sexual encounter without sacrificing frankness, it represents a genuine breakthrough in films.

Among major novelists Nabokov has had amazing luck in seeing his work transferred to the screen. Admittedly, only two of his books have been filmed so far, but they have both come off strikingly: Kubrick's *Lolita* still stands as one of the best American films of the decade, and now the English writer Edward Bond and director Tony Richardson have made an extraordinarily fine film of *Laughter in the Dark*. Richardson's films are usually cluttered with heavy, self-con-

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scious stylistic gimmicks; Nabokov has inspired him to by far his cleanest, most subtly inventive piece of direction.

Laughter in the Dark is an extended black joke, a sardonic attempt to twist some conventional dilemmas to their most bizarre extremes. This must be the most savage, unsentimental dissection of a man obsessed ever devised. Edward's passion for Margot is examined with clinical but witty detachment, as if he were an insect pinned inside a display case. Richardson's attitude is that of a coldblooded experimental scientist who pushes his human specimens into more and more perverse situations, testing their most intimate and desperate responses for his own amusement. In the novel Nabokov's description of the "dangerous" artist Axel Rex—Margot's lover—might almost be a description of his own artistic method, or that of the film-makers:

> . . . in riper years, when his artistic talent developed, he tried in more subtle ways to satiate his curiosity, for it was not anything morbid with a medical name—oh, not at all—just cold, wide-eyed curiosity, just the marginal notes supplied by life to his art. It amused him immensely to see life made to look silly, as it slid helplessly into caricature.

This film dares to caricature a man who is almost always seen in pathetic, not ironic terms; Edward, the archetypal dupe, the innocent victim, is the most obnoxious character in the film. There is nothing profound about *Laughter in the Dark,* and it is hardly the kind of film one would want to see often. But its viciousness is refreshing and stimulating. It gives us a perspective we would not have otherwise had, suddenly *illuminates* a banal romantic predicament: At the film's grisly conclusion, when the blind Edward, attempting to shoot Margot for her deceit, trips and shoots himself instead, we know that the old adage, "He brought it all on himself," has come to life with a bracingly cynical relevance.

Nicol Williamson is superbly repulsive as Edward, but Anna Karina as Margot is just as remarkable. The absence of a conventional moral evaluation of Margot is one of the most disturbing things about the film. Richardson, like Nabokov, tries to see her and understand her on *her* terms, without judgment, without condescension. She skillfully manipulates Edward for her own ends, but we never feel there is anything diabolical or cruel about her; she is one of the strangest movie seductresses ever imagined. For although she is a clever enough schemer, there is an innocent directness and honesty to her scheming —what she wants is so simple, and she goes about it so single-mindedly, without any real malice, that it is impossible to dislike her. She is quite open about her machinations to get rid of Edward's wife and set herself up in high style, and if Edward chooses to ignore what she is trying to do, the consequences are his own responsibility.

The film has updated the Nabokov novel, changed the setting from

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Germany to England, and put more emphasis on the class differences between Edward and Margot than Nabokov did. But the basic nature of the attraction is the same—the fastidious, elegant aesthete drawn to the coarse, vulgar slut (much as in *Lolita*). And the film does an excellent job of suggesting these tensions. A very early scene in which Edward visits the cinema where Margot works is especially brilliant and dislocating—he sits in the dark haunted by Margot, and bewildered by the audience's hysterical, raucous laughter that, as far as we can tell, is a completely inappropriate response to the film they are watching; Richardson keeps his camera close to Edward's face, and suggests his disorientation in this sleazy world by a subtly surrealistic use of sound. There are other moments invented specifically for the film that manage to capture Nabokov's outrageous sense of humor—for example, the scene in which Edward learns of Margot's and Herve's affair from a girl who saw them together in a boat, and who laughingly recounts the sexual details as she gets drunker and drunker. The last third of the movie, after Edward's blinding, is something of an anticlimax; it begins to repeat its cruel jokes for slightly diminishing returns. But on the whole there is a great deal of pleasure in watching this extremely civilized, extremely macabre charade. I can understand why such a sick film was a financial failure, but it disappeared before it could be properly appreciated.

But the most unjustly neglected film of the year is *The Guru,* which has the subtlety and intelligence and skepticism of *Laughter in the Dark,* but more warmth and humanity. James Ivory's last film, *Shakespeare Wallah,* was received more sympathetically; because this new film is in color, and because it has a superficially fashionable (or once-fashionable) subject—a British pop singer coming to India to study the sitar with a renowned maharishi—the critics seem to have assumed that Ivory has gone "commercial." But in fact, *The Guru* is only more ambitious than Ivory's earlier work; it is no less than a contemporary counterpart to *A Passage to India,* a comprehensive, eloquent vision of an abortive meeting of alien cultures.

The movie begins with a comical shot of the pop singer, Tom Pickle, in absurd giant sunglasses, disembarking from a plane to the shrieks of Indian teenyboppers. He looks like a caricature of a Beatle, and the guru, in his first scenes, looks, by contrast, like a mountain of Eastern purity and holiness. But then the film twists those first impressions around, startles us by asking that we see beneath the stereotypes to some sour human truths.

The guru Ustad is a superb comic creation—a vain, selfish, deluded man who feeds on and deliberately exploits the most thoughtless Western adoration of the Eastern mystic. Tom insists that he has come to India merely to learn how to play the sitar, but it is the guru who wants more—he wants to indoctrinate Tom in Indian philosophy,

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convert him, possess him; he wants to remold Tom's life in the image of his own. Ustad's pride blinds him—he spends too much time teaching the English groupie Jenny, who has no talent, because she venerates him not simply as a musician, but as a sage. And he is an awful hypocrite: He keeps boasting haughtily of the superiority of Eastern to Western culture, yet he is secretly jealous of Tom's "vulgar" celebrity, and when Tom's crude business manager comes for a short visit, Ustad is tickled by the idea of a Western tour where he may be able to hold court as prophet of Carnaby Street. Only when he actually plays the sitar do we feel that he has stature; for all of his human pettinesses and greeds are somehow overwhelmed by his musical talent and commitment—art, for a moment, washes life clean.

Probably everyone can appreciate the alert, unpredictable characterization of the guru. But the characterization of Tom is, in its own very different way, equally impressive. Everyone knows that the personal style of many young rock stars has become the model for millions of youth all over the world; this is the first film that tries, with imagination and sensitivity, to take this style seriously. What is remarkable about Tom is his total honesty with himself and with others. When the guru's older wife asks him if the younger wife is beautiful, Tom will not indulge her by lying. He refuses to accept anything that is not true and meaningful for him; and this is why he is so infuriating to the guru—because he will not give up his own identity, because he cannot be appropriated. There is an interesting moment when the idolatrous Jenny talks jargon about British imperialism and racism, and the exploitation of India; Tom answers simply that his own family was always very poor, and her vague general talk about imperialism has nothing to do with *his* experience. He insists on testing every cliché, even the most liberal and benevolent, to see if he understands what it means. Yet he is responsive to other people, to India, and he never imposes what he is on anyone else. He is cool but not cold. I don't believe that anyone quite like Tom exists, but then I don't think he is meant realistically, like the guru; he is intended as an ideal, but what makes him exciting is that for perhaps the first time in all the recent movies about young people, a character is intelligently idealized, not coarsely sentimentalized. We can *all* envy Tom's self-awareness. One of the pleasures of movies is that they *can* create heroes, stylize certain human qualities to give them a larger-than-life romantic glamor. It seems almost puritanical to complain about this idealization when a hero is as mature, challenging, and fully-imagined as the young singer in this film. Michael York, a very underrated actor, is marvelous in the role—he manages to be likable without ever softening the characterization.

What I respect about the film as a whole is the skepticism it shares with its hero, its incisive questioning of the current reverence for the

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East. Ivory and his writer, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, are both Americans, and although they obviously love India, they do not, like so many of the teenyboppers mocked in the film, deny their Western origins and identities; they do not pretend to be something that they are not. They look at India with affection and sympathy, but with detachment and perspective too. And they look to their own culture for values that can still serve them far away from home. What is most unsettling about this film is its thoughtful acknowledgment of the impossibility of total integration. The film admires Tom's honest regard for the *differences* between East and West, not Jenny's hysterical attempt to "merge" with the Orient. There are very fine scenes that show Jenny terrifed by the superstitious cabals between the guru's wife and her fortuneteller, scenes that capture the *strangeness* of India, the mysteries that will always elude her. As Tom says to Jenny, about the impenetrability of India, "You get to a certain point, and you can't go any further—then you go home."

There are weaknesses in the film, particularly the shallowness of Rita Tushingham's part, and the contrived romance between her and Tom in the last few scenes. A more pleasant weakness is the rather indulgent preoccupation with the beauties of India; at moments the film seems to want to become a travelogue. Ivory's gifts as a director are in his feeling for character and performance. As a visual stylist he is not exceptional; he knows how to find lovely pictures, but he cannot relate them in any integral way to his film's themes. There is a fascinating documentary side to *The Guru*—particularly its glimpses of the Westernized quasi-hippie culture of contemporary Indian youth—but the fictional scenes are really *more* fascinating. Ivory should have put more trust in his dramatic abilities. *The Guru* has no drama at all by Hollywood standards—very little plot, no contrived confrontations, no violence—but it is filled with moments of gentle perception and discovery of its people.

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LUCY R. LIPPARD

Art Within the Arctic Circle

SEPTEMBER 24: FROM NEW YORK to Edmonton, Alberta, with Lawrence Weiner, artist, to meet Bill Kirby, Director of the Edmonton Art Gallery and the N. E. Thing Company (Vancouver artist Iain Baxter and his wife Elaine), and then fly to somewhere within the Arctic Circle, where Weiner, NETCo and Harry Savage, an artist from Edmonton, will execute works of art proposed for that location. Virgil Hammock, an Edmonton journalist and professor, and I will document the proceedings. The trip is sponsored by the Art Gallery as part of their "Place and Process" exhibition, featuring outdoor and temporary work; the show itself will consist primarily of film and photographic documentation of works done in Edmonton and other parts of the world by the participating artists (place ranges from the Sahara to the Arctic Circle to New York, process from an inane cornflake-spreading piece to the rather more provocative contributions of artists such as Richard Long, Dennis Oppenheim and Robert Morris). The Arctic expedition arose from Weiner's piece, conceived before the exhibition: "An abridgement of an abutment to on near or about the Arctic Circle."[1]

September 25: Spent night in Edmonton and set out on the 1200 mile flight to Inuvik, Northwest Territory, free passes courtesy of the Pacific Western Airlines. The distances involved are impressive. Edmonton itself is about 2400 miles from New York, near the 55th parallel; Inuvik is some 60 miles within the Circle, almost to the 70th parallel, in the delta of the great Mackenzie River, main thoroughfare to the North (all provisions go up by barge, or plane, since the gravel highway goes only as far as Yellowknife), and a short distance from Beaufort Sea—the relatively "warm" section of the Arctic Ocean. The land mass of the Canadian North is immense, the barren spaces awesome. The placid geometrically furrowed fields of central Alberta give way to huge forests; halfway through the trip the land begins to crumble into water—innumerable lakes, ponds and rivers. The first stop, Hay River, on the southern edge of the Great Slave Lake, is bleak but spotted with brilliant yellow birches. Yellowknife, on the northern edge, is blue water, black muskeg bogs and ledges that are gray from the ground but pinkish from above. In the hour and a half we have there we see the old part of this goldmining town (dirt roads, shacks, tarpaper and log cabins, Indian children, huge black

1 I shall concentrate here on Weiner's work since I recently discussed Baxter's at length (*Artscanada*, June 1969) and am not acquainted with Savage's outside of that discussed here.

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ravens and lots of dogs, boats, seaplanes) and Larry does one installment of a work that is being done all over the world: "A natural water course diverted reduced or displaced"—here a small stone dam across a stream running into the lake.

One more stop at Norman Wells, an oil town set on the broad green-brown river between white mountain ranges, then to Inuvik, the prospect bleaker and bleaker with low, even hills, all alike, dotted with scrub pine, like poles with brief, cold-stunted branches sticking out the sides. These are vestiges of the taiga forest alternating with tundra—spongy hummocks of lichen, mosses, tiny plants, over a layer of permafrost (frozen ice and soil) that never melts and extends across the whole Canadian North, making oil leakage particularly dangerous since it would spread across the water table instead of being absorbed into the earth. The landscape is not so exotic as I had expected; it is still not winter here, though temperatures are around 15°; there is some snow, lots of ice, and the ground is frozen. What makes it so impressive, and so uninteresting to describe, is the space, and the infinite sameness of the terrain, the very subtle color range illuminated by a sharp, even light which has a terrible clarity. We arrive at 6:30 p.m. into the eerie red glow of a curiously diffused sunset edged by dense blue skies.

Inuvik is a new town, begun in 1954; it is a new, and deplorable, type of town, owned by the government and oil companies, built as a "showplace" to replace the dying Fort towns, or trading posts. In this case it replaced Aklavik, whose native peoples were virtually ordered to move on to Inuvik, though they resisted in part and Aklavik still subsists. As Farley Mowat has pointed out, "Inuvik was designed purely as a white administrative center" in which Indians and Eskimos are on the wrong side of the tracks—off the Utilidor (a sprawling "tin lizard" or metal overground tunnel connecting all the "good" houses in town and providing them with heat, water and sewers). The result is "one of Canada's newest slums"—West Inuvik, or "Happy Valley," a "transitional area," as a pompous government administrator blithely called it when Larry said he had visited this miserable conglomeration of leantos, tents and shacks. Inuvik is a redneck town with an overnight population of well-dressed businessmen (many of them German and American) who come in to set up further exploitation plans. It is unexpected to come out of such a trip so preoccupied with social ills. We were in Inuvik 39½ hours. Long enough to get mad. "Why Go North? It's Mostly Because of the Money" reads a headline in the September *McLean's Magazine*. The money is not going to the natives. Canada has done as badly in many respects by her native population as we have. We stay at the misnamed Eskimo Inn, brand new jerry-built plywood structure simulating the last word in North American motel architecture, but the steps are open, raw wood; the building stands on tall, rough wooden pilings;

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the main street is mud; it's a sow's ear that refused transformation. ("The Eskimo Inn is not for Eskimos," a young native girl commented bitterly on the night of its Grand Opening, after she and friends had been evicted from the public bathroom.)

September 26: We borrow a truck from the Research Station, buy some wool caps at the Hudson's Bay Company (since fur-trading died out, simply another Sears or Grant's). The N. E. Thing Company sets out on its walking piece, which takes all morning; the rest of us go to the banks of the Mackenzie, not yet ice, though the mud is frozen, cracking eerily over large areas when stepped on. Larry does a second and third installment of "A natural water course diverted reduced or displaced"—a curved channel and a straight one, through which the broad river is indeed diverted—a gesture both absurd and touchingly grand.

Nearby Harry fills a long strand of clear plastic wiener casings with water and lays it out in a slightly undulating line, about 20'. This "ice worm" begins to freeze immediately. (When we come back later it is almost solid, though some lumber has been unloaded from a barge onto one end of it.) Then Harry lies on a sheet of yellow blueprint paper, light-sensitive, and creates a temporary silhouette.

Out to a kind of gravel pit in the bush, where Larry makes "An abridgement of an abutment to on near or about the Arctic Circle." Using whatever is at hand, in this case a cigarette package, he leans it against a broken pile of dirt. The piece is donated to the Edmonton Art Gallery, received by Bill Kirby, and will be registered as such by a lawyer.

After lunch, the Baxters now holed up in the Canadian National telegraph office, the rest of us go to "Slim" Semmler's general store (antlers over the door, run-down interior crowded with rubbers, long johns, rabbit pelts, canned foods, fur animals and bead pins, "eskimo" belts made in Japan); Bill digs out a few pieces of marvelous eskimo sculpture by an Eastern Arctic eskimo named Charlie Kooghealook. Back in the bush, Larry creases a rock with several shots of a .22 ("The Arctic Circle shattered"). This piece belongs to me and I'm especially excited to see it executed. Harry tries to fly a plastic kite but the Arctic wind is too strong and it breaks. Larry, exploring, discovers another running water course and does a fourth and very beautiful diversion by making a semidam of sticks and sheets of ice in a little waterfall. On the way back through town, Harry creates a spontaneous event which is one of the trip's high points. He still has a lot of these long sausage casings, which come rolled up in sticks. He goes over to a ravine where a bunch of children are playing and fiddles around conspicuously with the stick; they ask, of course, what it is, he gives it to them, and they inflate huge lengths of it, wind it around themselves, pull it, throw it, jump over it, and

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have a general field day while the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) watch suspiciously from a car.

To the bar for hot rum. An Indian nearby beckons to Larry and buys him a drink. I go off with Bill and the Baxters. Find out later that the Indian's first, just conversational, question is "Are you a fucking hippie?" He accepted Larry's "No" and said the priests had warned them against hippies who "would ruin everybody because they don't drink." More drinks and talk led to Larry's being taken by another Indian, a truck driver, to the "settlement" slum. The truck driver wanted to buy his boots. Pointed toes are stylish in Inuvik, where everyone dresses in high style, for the 1950's, but the Indians have wide feet.

On the other side of town with Bill and NETCo. Having spent the morning concentrating on Larry's pieces, I am struck again by the difference between him and Iain. They represent opposite poles of the non-object tendency. They hadn't met before this trip, though knew of each other. Yesterday they were talking about work they have done and have thought about doing and the congruence is strange. They have often hit independently on similar ideas (a can of paint poured into a hole in the ground; nails driven into the earth; Arctic into Artic). Yet their heads are entirely different, Iain's rapidly alighting on one idea after another, often contradictory, usually well McLuhanized and with far-reaching implications; Larry working slowly, with total seriousness, within a clear self-defined framework, a basically poetic expression, that defines *his* art. The all-embracing, Dada element in Iain disturbs him, as does the idea that art can be entertainment, which he finds debasing and ultimately injurious to art-as-art, but they get along well.

Baxter is little interested in Art per se and NETCo has no "style"; different departments deal with different areas of "Visual Sensitivity Information." This trip deals with Arctic V.S.I. and ranges, typically and exuberantly, all over the place; from communications pieces dependent upon electronic technology (see below), to the walking piece (Iain and Elaine circled Inuvik wearing a pedometer and step-counting device—some 3¼ miles, 10,314 steps) which recorded the experience of a town (and a circuitous pun in distance); a piece by a Vancouver friend—George Sawchuk—consisting of the insertion of a padlocked bolt into the Northern part of a tree trunk, titled "Locked Up North" (maybe a commentary on Canada's reluctance to deal with her Northern territories), and the works executed that afternoon alone: Elaine did a water exchange between the Seymour River, B. C., and the Mackenzie, adding the first, subtracting the second; we placed a large black and white sign reading "You Are Now in the Middle of an N. E. Thing Co. Landscape" in the taiga-tundra; I took a quarter-mile walk due North through the bush, compass in hand; Iain sprayed an East-West white paint line in the tundra parallel to the

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latitudes, Elaine sprayed a tiny tree white (early snow) and, having discovered, by comparing the Rand-McNally Star Chart with the map of Inuvik's few miles of road, that the road to the airport bore the same configuration as that of the constellation "Sculptor," NETCo marked that section of the road with four round mirrors laid concave side up in the bush at the angle turns, simulating the stars.

The day we left, the Baxters did an "ecological" project in which areas of the tundra were turned over (I haven't the details on this). Baxter's interest in ecology predates that of most artists who have picked up on it during the last year or so. As a zoology major in college and later an illustrator of nature books, he became interested in the intricate balances of organisms and their environments and has since plugged this into information theory so that many of NETCo's pieces quietly draw attention to that relationship (for example—an erosion fountain, slow motion flow; various ice and snow and skiing pieces in which natural processes are formalized within a small area). As an artist, of course, he also enjoys manipulating that relationship; last year he proposed a controlled grazing project by which concentric squares of different lengths of grass would be formed, and a "formal snow storm" in the Nevada desert where a snow configuration would be retained after the thaw by inset cooling coils. He has projects that deal with grafting of trees, artificially created and controlled oases, change of ecology within an area and then restoration to normal state. The Arctic seems an appropriate place for such studies because its ecology is extraordinarily delicate and vitally important to the future of the area.

Starving, we return to the hotel to find there is no place to eat in town tonight and we are forced to attend the Eskimo Inn's grand opening to take advantage of pink alcoholic punch and soggy hors d'oeuvres. The whole town was invited and a few natives were there; a band played a fast rhythmic jigging music for Eskimo "step dancing" but few were interested in performing. The bored gentry of the town expected more. One of the overdressed ladies was overheard complaining, "We gave them drinks and now they won't even dance." Indians sat in one area, government and businessmen in another. Some glasses were smashed. Around midnight we go out again to do Harry's last piece. Back into the gravel pit where we light fifty red flares over a large area. Spectacular sights, especially all that hot mobile light set against the clear Arctic stars and pale full moon, made all the more bluish by contrast. We leave before the flares go out and see it from a distance too. Wonder if anyone else has seen it, then pass an RCMP car going out to the site. Just as they turn in, the last flare flickers out.

September 27: Back on the plane, Larry and I beginning another 24-hour trip back to New York City. Talking it over we are 1) very

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satisfied with the trip, 2) appalled by our reactions to social conditions in Inuvik, 3) I find that my strongest impression is of the work done, though the Arctic environment was in part responsible for the art's memorability.

•

The kind of space dealt with by Weiner's art and some of Baxter's is not the traditional *occupied* or conquered space in which an object exists. It is a space partially dependent upon the receiver's experience of space and of words, and greatly dependent upon time. Weiner read somewhere about a custom of, I think, the Great Barrens Eskimos, who measure their emotions in actual space/time. When a man is angry he walks the anger out of his system in a straight line, stopping when the anger is gone and planting there an "anger stick" which will for some time bear witness to the length (therefore strength) of that emotion. The physical, esthetic and emotional beauty of such a gesture appeals to Weiner, whereas Baxter utilizes the oral tradition within the network of technological media. For example, three of the latter's pieces from the Circle were: a telegram reading "This statement will be is being has been sent from inside to outside the Arctic Circle" (the language a conscious nod to Weiner); a message sent by ham radio from the Arctic to the Antarctic (contact may take six months to be acknowledged and it will be only the second time it has been attempted, according to the Inuvik operator); a piece executed by NETCo in the Circle and friends in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Vancouver where each one looked to the North for a certain period of time, thereby "drawing" convergent sight lines in space and forming a triangle.

Before he became a painter, Weiner was a poet. He no longer writes, but his book, *Statements,* published by Seth Siegelaub in 1968, presents his work in a form generally associated with poetry—a single phrase per page, with blank facing page, no punctuation, and such eccentric, non-hyphenated word breaks as *f/rom, st/andard, pressur/e.* The work itself, however, deals essentially with a visual image which, when carried out, attains a poignant and insistent concreteness. As far as Weiner is concerned, the work exists as validly on paper as it would after being made or done; some works are "freehold" or can be "collected" by any "receiver" who cares to own or execute them during a given period of time. In Siegelaub's semi-immaterial, semi-invisible *January 5-31, 1969* show, the freehold work was "One standard Air Force dye marker thrown into the sea." Weiner's catalogue statement read:

1) The artist may construct the piece

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2) The piece may be fabricated
3) The piece need not be built
Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership

Siegelaub's *March* show (which existed as a calendar-catalogue and took place or did not take place all over the world, one piece each day of the month) included Weiner's "An object tossed from one country to another" which NETCo "extended" by answering, ",and back again." (Baxter later executed this piece and filmed it; the object, tossed from America to Canada, and back again, was the movie camera.) This was a generalized piece which became specific only when Baxter executed it. Others are more fundamentally specific. For the *Summer* show (these geographically scattered exhibitions have no titles aside from the dates of their duration), Weiner executed the following: "A rubber ball thrown into the American Falls Niagara Falls / a rubber ball thrown into the Canadian Falls Niagara Falls." It was photographically documented by filmmaker Hollis Frampton, though for the most part Weiner does not encourage photographs of the works themselves, considering it immaterial (or nobody else's business) whether or not he has actually made the pieces or whether he has just gone to the site and stood around (I suspect they get made).

The pieces made in the Arctic Circle are typical of Weiner's more recent work, about to be published in a second book, in their examination of the relationship between language and act and visual experience. The 1968 pieces were essentially descriptions of possible objects, however dematerialized ("a series of stakes set in the ground at regular intervals to form a rectangle/twine strung from stake to stake to demark a grid"), or descriptions of acts often resulting in impermanent visual residue: ("A field cratered by structured simultaneous TNT explosions," "One aerosol can of enamel sprayed to conclusion directly upon the floor"). The more recent work often focuses on place as material, and action and place are often delimited by prepositions. Objects thrown on the sea, in the sea and at the sea are three different pieces. He is also concerned with the change inherent in physical boundaries (several pieces deal with international borders), theoretical boundaries ("art" and "life") and accordingly provides his own linguistic boundaries (subtle distinctions in the wordings of the work that affect or do not affect their physical presence if executed). The choice of words is very precise even when the choice of place or materials is wholly open or arbitrary.

Weiner doesn't like to have to go outside of the situation for materials; even borrowing a rifle for the shattering piece was an annoyance. He shares with Carl Andre and others a distant and perhaps unwitting debt to Duchamp's esthetic of the found object, the

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temporary act. But Weiner is above all a purist in that he is interested in art, art alone, art that is "received" by people but not necessarily possessed by them. He and several other unfortunately dubbed "conceptual" artists seem to be fusing what once appeared to be the two diametrically opposing mainstreams of modern art: the acceptive and the rejective, or Dada-Surrealist and abstract-formalist, life and art, messy and clean aspects. They share with the so-called "minimalists" a dislike of the extraneous and the anecdotal, but they have taken an additional step toward divorcing art from luxury decoration by abolishing or at least deemphasizing its object aspect. Many of Weiner's pieces concern "removal," an idea explored in 1960 with a "cratering piece" in Mill Valley, California, and in later niched monotonal canvases. His visible contribution to the January show was a "36″ × 36″ removal to the lathing or support wall of plaster or wallboard from a wall." He disavows interest in the "process" (a fashionable concept in the art world at the moment) of removal, but finds "the idea of removal is just as—if not more—interesting than the intrusion of a fabricated object into a space, as sculpture is." He also refuses to be called a "materialist," which "implies a primary involvement in materials, but I am primarily concerned with art. One could say the subject matter is materials, but its reason to be goes way beyond the materials to something else, that something else being art . . . If I were to choose the condition of the piece [fabrication or non-fabrication], that would be an art decision which would lend unnecessary and unjustified weight to what amounts to presentation—and that has very little to do with art" (interview by Arthur Rose, *Arts,* February 1969).

Though Weiner showed paintings in 1964 and 1965, the wandering, impermanent and geographical basis of much of his current work has its roots in years spent hitchhiking across the country, herding sheep, working with a forest ranger, with explosives, on the docks, at sea, when he would make sculptures in the woods or fields and simply leave them there to be found or not found by a chance "receiver." At the moment he is following up his particular affinity for the North by a trip to the Norwegian Arctic to make a glacier piece. Northern spaces are grand, bleak, infinite, and reject autonomous, man-made objects almost by definition. Vilhjálmur Stefánsson has written of scale-deception in the Arctic:

> One sees things under circumstances that give one no idea of the distance, and consequently one has no scale for comparison. The marmot at twenty yards occupies as large a visual angle as a grizzly bear at several hundred, and if you suppose the marmot to be several hundred yards away you naturally take him for a bear. There is, under certain conditions of hazy Arctic light, nothing to give you a measure of the distance, nothing to furnish a scale to determine size by comparison. [*My Life with the Eskimo,* p. 78]

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Under such conditions, imposed somewhat differently by the endless rolling tundra and a flat snow landscape, a work of art has no scale, or rather no relative scale, and does not compete with nature, partly because few people will see it, partly because it need be compared to no other art, partly because it is impermanent anyway. The natural water courses were diverted, displaced or reduced only temporarily. The rock creased by bullets resulting from "The Arctic Circle Shattered" is an artifact but it is not the work of art. I may own it on paper but the residents of Inuvik who come to the gravel pit in the tundra where the rock is located "own" the artifact, the five people who were present at its execution are "receivers" of the act, and anyone who reads it is an equally direct recipient. The property values accruing to most art are absent, and the work itself either reverts to a primitive, pre-ownership natural state or else is available as a post-capitalist communally owned work of art.

It is not wholly coincidental that Weiner's esthetic agrees with that of the Eskimos who were once the masters of the land where Inuvik stands.[2] The Eskimo language contains no words for measurement of space or time. The fact that in the winter the arctic landscape is constantly changing under the influence of storms and temperature alterations, and his nomadic life-style, give the eskimo a curious (for us) attitude toward property, toward form, toward permanence. "Where we think of art as possession, and possession to us means control, means to do with as we like, art to them is a way of revealing" (Carpenter). "The eskimo conception of individuality belongs in the same category of conceptions as that of unity and entirety, the whole and the all; and the distinction between spirit in general and individual spirit possesses not nearly so much power over their minds as over ours" (Riesman). Their language contains no verb "to be" but all words (there is little distinction between verb and noun) are forms of to be:

> Eskimo is not a nominal language; it does not simply name things which already exist, but rather brings both things and actions (nouns and verbs) into being as it goes along. . . . To Western minds, the "monotony" of snow, ice and darkness can often be depressing, even frightening. Nothing in particular stands out; there is no scenery in the sense that we use the term. But the eskimos are not interested in scenery, but in action, existence. . . . Theirs is a world which has to be conquered with each act and

[2] Here I depend heavily on the following articles and books: Edmund Carpenter, "Image Making in Arctic Art" and Paul Riesman, "The Eskimo Discovery of Man's Place in the Universe," both in Gyorgy Kepes, ed., *Sign, Image, Symbol* (New York, 1966); Farley Mowat, *Canada North* (Toronto, 1967), and *People of the Deer* (New York, 1968); Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, *My Life with the Eskimo* (New York, 1962).

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> statement. . . . Man is the force that reveals form. He is the force which ultimately cancels nothingness. [Carpenter]

The eye is subservient to the ear, and possessions, even their own art of ivory carving, are treated carelessly, as acts like songs rather than objects to be coveted:

> The essential feature of sound is not its location, but that it *be,* that it fill space. . . . Auditory space has no favored focus. It is a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing the thing. It is not pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions, moment by moment. It has no fixed boundaries. The eye focuses, pinpoints, abstracts, locating each object in physical space, against a background; the ear favors sound from any direction. [Carpenter]

Weiner has done his best work since he moved out of the pictorial boundaries of painting and the static boundaries of sculpture into the extremely complex realm of the indeterminate in relation to the determinate. His pieces are highly abstract because they can be "made" with whatever "materials" the reader-receiver "has in mind" or any materials the receiver-executor has in reach. While they are eminently out there in "life," to be experienced almost at random when they exist outside of museum-gallery-collection circumstances, they are also very much art—non-functional, expressive, sensorially stimulating, raising new questions *in situ* or out of sight.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code)

1. DATE OF FILING: October 1, 1969. 2. TITLE OF PUBLICATION: The Hudson Review.
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE: Quarterly
4. LOCATION OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23205.
5. LOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS: 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
6. NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR.
PUBLISHER: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
EDITOR: Frederick Morgan, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
MANAGING EDITOR: Irene Skolnick, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
7. OWNER: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022, a New York membership corporation not authorized to issue stock, whose members are: Joseph Bennett, Edmund T. Delaney and Frederick Morgan, all same address.
8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES: None.

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies Printed *(Net Press Run)*	3264	3200
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	575	550
2. Mail Subscriptions	2519	2550
C. Total Paid Circulation	3094	3100
D. Free Distribution *(including samples)* by Mail, Carrier or Other Means	70	25
E. Total Distribution *(Sum of C and D)*	3164	3125
F. Office Use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled after Printing	100	75
G. Total *(Sum of E &F—should equal net press run shown in A)*	3264	3200

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JOHN SIMON

On Producing *Peer Gynt*

THE PRODUCTION OF *Peer Gynt* by the New York Shakespeare Festival in Central Park last summer put in question the viability of the entire American theatre as it now stands. It was a dismal, a shameful fiasco, but the elements that went into making it extend into the farthest reaches of our theatre and culture.

Where in America today could *Peer Gynt* be properly performed? In my time, there have been two mountings of the play in New York: one in 1949, an ANTA production with John Garfield as Peer; one in 1960, at the Phoenix, with Fritz Weaver. Both were artistic and audience failures—the one illustrative of Broadway's insufficiency, the other of Off-Broadway's—and Robert Brustein's mournful remarks on the latter production (*Seasons of Discontent,* pp. 218-221) are painfully appropriate to the recent Central-Park shambles. There is even a historical link: the Phoenix production was directed by Stuart Vaughan; Vaughan was a foundation-supported director who staged some of the first Shakespearean offerings in the Park; later, his disciple and ex-wife, Gladys Vaughan, became Joseph Papp's chief director at the new Delacorte Theatre, and it is from her that the current artistic director, Gerald Freedman, who staged this production, took over. The Vaughans, Stuart and Gladys, have mercifully faded from sight; Freedman, less happily, is in full swing.

Could *Peer* be done on Broadway these days? Out of the question. Broadway does not present classics unless, as very rarely happens, some tremendous box-office "name" takes it into his spacious head to do a Lear or Hamlet or whatnot; or unless some successful London production is transferred to Broadway for a limited engagement and, usually, with even more limited success. (The most recent such disaster was Nicol Williamson's *Hamlet,* directed by Tony Richardson.) An archetypal Broadway producer, Arthur Cantor, once declared publicly what a sorry state of affairs it would be if several Broadway theatres were playing Lope de Vega. The real meanings of his remark were (a) Who needs the classics, anyhow? and (b) Aren't you impressed that I know all about Lope?

Off-Broadway has proved itself equally uninterested in reviving the classics; in many cases this is justified by lack of financial and histrionic resources. Though it can do such campy things as an updated musical version of Aristophanes' *Peace,* a straightforward production of that play would be beyond its means. Last season, for example, I attended a staging of *The Dance of Death* at the Round-

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about Theatre. This much-lauded playhouse in the Chelsea district had received praise for its recent productions of *King Lear* and *Candida,* and its current Strindberg venture was enthusiastically reviewed by, among others, Howard Thompson of the *Times,* who compared it to Laurence Olivier's production at England's National Theatre. This Chelsea *Dance of Death* proved a sickening travesty, and I felt mortified for having dragged to it a distinguished visiting Yugoslav drama critic. And what are the difficulties of that play compared to those of *Peer Gynt*?

The Lincoln Center Repertory Company has often toyed with the idea of staging *Peer.* In the company's very first year under Blau and Irving, the former spoke of his desire to do it; more recently, *Peer* would appear as one of several plays under consideration for the following year. Next year inevitably came around; *Peer Gynt,* equally unfailingly, did not. This is less than surprising when you consider that under the sole guidance of Jules Irving we get either plays in which some transient star expressed interest (*Cyrano,* because Richard Basehart wanted to do it, though by opening time he was so scared that he lost his voice and Robert Symonds had to play the part—execrably, in a wretched production; *Lear,* because Lee J. Cobb wanted to do it and, worse luck, actually went through with it—under Gerald Freedman's direction: one part watered-down Peter Brook, two parts nothing); or plays which, for one reason or another, are considered foolproof. Such, last season, were a previously unproduced play by the commercial playwright William Gibson, and Molière's *Miser* in a production replete with crowd-pleasing horseplay. *Peer Gynt* could not make it in either category.

Having written the introduction to a new translation of *Peer Gynt* (by Jurgensen and Schenkkan; Crofts Classics, 1966), I have no wish to reanalyze the play here. But any production, and any critique of that production, must start with a brief interpretation of the work. For example, Kenneth Tynan sees the play as "a study of the fallacy that is inherent in total dedication to self-fulfilment." Robert Brustein sees Peer's life as "a tragedy of waste," a gifted man having chosen "to be neither a great saint nor a great sinner, only an opportunistic mediocrity." Frank Wedekind perceived the play as "the fate of a man who, by becoming intellectually hypertrophied, runs morally to seed." I myself would stress the unfortunate upbringing of Peer, which undercuts his physical courage with moral cowardice. Yet the play regards that cravenness with ambivalence. Because of it, Peer walks out on Solveig, unable to confess his affair with the Greenclad; but, then, it is that cowardice that makes him boggle at undergoing the irrevocable eye operation of the trolls, or at revealing his identity to the Lean One and getting carted off to hell. And it is this pusillanimity that saves Peer in the end—if indeed he is saved—for he summons up his courage to face Solveig not for the sake of salvation through her love, but for a list of major

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grievances that would help him elude the Buttonmoulder's ladle. Thus Peer seems to stumble across his redemption.

Though the various interpretations I have quoted strike me as, in the main, correct, this irony must also be noted. Moritz Prozor, Ibsen's French translator, was right in saying (as quoted by Rolf Fjelde), "To be oneself is not to be Peer Gynt or another; it is to be a man, to kill in oneself what Peer vaingloriously calls the Gyntian self, in order to bring to life the human self." But the play also intends to show that man learns almost nothing from experience, that it is luck and, finally, the self-sacrifice of some ideal creature like Solveig that saves him—if he is to be saved at all. Peer's opposite, the unnamed peasant boy who mutilates himself to stay out of the war and cultivate his garden, is probably the better man; but his life is atypical and he is rejected by society. Peer, on the other hand, is in most ways archetypal: almost all other characters reflect his egoism, hypocrisy, and greed.

What sort of a guiding idea of the play did Gerald Freedman, the director of *Gynt* and artistic director of the now year-round New York Shakespeare Festival *cum* Public Theatre, evolve and proceed upon? His program note demonstrated not only poverty of style but also paucity of ideas. In fact, what ideas the note did contain were lifted from Rolf Fjelde's introduction to his translation (Signet Classics, 1964), and then watered down, truncated, or misunderstood. When Freedman writes, "Ibsen encompassed all the devices of the romantic theatre and used them to service what is essentially a non-romantic play," he is paraphrasing Fjelde's more succinct reference to "this antiromantic work that employs the full resources of the romantic theatre." When Freedman, with clumsy ambiguity, writes that "Peer's life suggests that one creates one's own world, not Fate," he is merely vulgarizing Fjelde's "Ibsen suggests that . . . the world we never made is, often to a surprising extent, the outgrowth of our own human powers or a denial thereof . . ." Freedman speaks of self-discovery coming "when one breaks out of this cyclical pattern of ego and truly relates to another"; Fjelde proposes two possible solutions. "One . . . would be to break the cycle of repetitions," he begins, and these are the words Freedman latches on to. But Fjelde develops even his first alternative into a broader, more philosophical conception; Freedman settles for simple psychologizing couched in psychiatric jargon: "relate" without the reflexive pronoun. Although Fjelde is quite a reliable guide, undigested regurgitation of a single critic, without anything of one's own added, is hardly a solid starting point. And, typically, Freedman nowhere acknowledges his debt to Fjelde.

Now for the casting. For the role of Solveig, Freedman had what he thought was the brilliant idea of getting Judy Collins, the folk singer. "She truly comes with innocence," Freedman was quoted in the *Times*, "with wonder still about the whole art and idea of acting." Having heard one of her records and seen her picture on the al-

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bum cover, he felt he had found the true Solveig, "so at one with herself when she sings . . . a flower child and an earth mother." And he asked the casting people for *a* Judy Collins. Unfortunately, they got him *the* Judy Collins. He gave her the part without having her read for it! And so we got a woman of thirty, who looked it, playing the teen-aged Solveig not with the wonder *of* acting, but with wonder *about* acting. Virtually every line of Solveig's was read the way a frightened bride in a big church pronounces her "I do!"—all one hears is the silence stretching itself a little. Miss Collins is a large woman (or appears large on stage), who, from the front, does look like a handsome senior flower child going on earth mother. But let her turn her profile and she becomes mother earth: lumpish, common clay. Her movements lack poetry, and she has no pantomime. Most shockingly, she could not even sing the songs Freedman and his composer, John Morris, had written into the play for her. Her voice is small, uninflected, and ventures out of her throat with the tentativeness of a novice tightrope-walker who finds the safety net is missing. This is the irony of a top popular concert and recording star who—without fancy enough electronics or a small enough high-school auditorium—cannot put a song across.

Solveig was, of course, deliberately not fleshed out by Ibsen. That is sound strategy: the ideal girl-wife-mother figure best achieves symbolic stature in complete diaphaneity, which every man can fill with the image of his yearning, and every woman with her image of herself. What Peer recalls of Solveig throughout his wanderings is the vision of a girl, eyes downcast, clinging to her mother's gown, and carrying her hymnal wrapped in her kerchief: the shy, neat, pious, dutiful, modest maiden. He was once the silver-hasped book in her hands, Peer tells the madman Hussein. To be enfolded in such devout, pure love is the secret dream of the restless, acquisitive, lecherous adventurer. And this image of selfless dedication was simply not forthcoming from Judy Collins.

The part of Aase was assigned to Estelle Parsons, best known for her portrayal of the stupid, hysterical sister-in-law in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Moon-faced, corpulent, with a flat voice that turns rancid around the edges, Miss Parsons is best at comedy but, like so many comics, ill-advisedly sees herself as a serious dramatic actress. She has nothing of the "small, delicate" Aase, one moment a severely puritanical parent, the next a doting glosser-over of her son's faults, ready to defend him, wrong though he be, against men and trolls. Aase's moral ambivalence and Jon Gynt's overindulgence and recklessness bred and coddled the inconsistency that grew up to be Peer Gynt. But Estelle Parsons never captured the span between force and frailty in Aase, the divergence of her extremes; instead, she wrapped the character in a muffler of cozy dullness from one end to the other. Her death—a scene of unequaled pathos—was about as moving as that

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of a mosquito slapped to oblivion on one's forearm. But she illustrated the limitations of a typical American actor: not only is he not given a chance to train and develop in a generous variety of parts, he is in fact encouraged to wallow in the ditch of his specialty, which, narrow though it be, has always room enough for some great classic role to be dragged down into it.

No better—perhaps worse—was Olympia Dukakis, who played Ingrid, the Greenclad, and Anitra, the three representative "other women" in Peer's life. It is probably from the 1962 Old Vic production of *Peer Gynt* (whose cast list is reprinted with the Michael Meyer translation used in the Park) that Freedman got the idea for his tripling; but in that production the actress was Adrienne Corri, an attractive and versatile performer. Miss Dukakis is unsuited for these parts by virtue of age and crudity; even if she was merely implementing Freedman's absurd notion to coarsen and burlesque all three roles, the personal vulgarity she brought to the process of perverting the text compounded the offense. James Cahill's Troll King was plain oafish, and John Heffernan's Buttonmoulder as flavorous as boiled water. In several lesser parts, Michael Baseleon and Robert Stattel ranged from the inconsequential to the ungainly.

This brings us to Stacy Keach in the title part. Peer is a curious combination. He is a poet and a dreamer—in part Ibsen himself—but also a self-seeking opportunist; he is boldly and indefatigably enterprising, but also generally misguided and ultimately cowardly. "It is the expression of fantasy," Raymond Williams has written, "which he understands as the expression of self," and he will fulfill himself "not by fighting but by dodging." This requires an actor who can oscillate between contradictory impulses and sometimes interweave them into bizarre spider webs. Keach worked hard on Gynt, and had some good moments, but he did not encompass the part. As the young Peer, he lacked the headlong lyricism; as the old Peer, he could not make the tragicomic struggle with the Buttonmoulder and the falling into Solveig's lap achieve the proper bittersweet tang, the wry pathos. But he remained an actor throughout—not, like most of the others, a buffoon; and the fact that he often could not be heard was presumably the fault of the inadequate sound system.

Freedman cut the play mercilessly and illogically. The way to do *Peer Gynt,* especially in the Park, is, I would think, to leave it more or less uncut with a long intermission for a picnic or frankfurter-stand dinner. But if cutting there must be, you cannot, for example, omit the unnamed boy who chops off his finger in III, i; then bring in his funeral in V, iii, but chopped down to about one finger's worth: a few closing lines of the Pastor's eulogy. Even Benedetto Croce, who did not like the play, considered that eulogy "admirable." Freedman not only jettisoned a character meant to counterbalance Peer, he introduced a meaningless fragment of a scene. The actors

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were deployed all over Ming Cho Lee's unit set, which looked like a psychotic Bridge on the River Kwai, spiraling upwards and ending in a jungle lookout platform. The cast was equipped with coats and umbrellas, and it looked as if any moment they would go darting up and down this structure in a musical number entitled "Dancing in the Rain."

Or take the madhouse scene, IV, xiii. Freedman staged it, in amateurish imitation of Brook's *Marat/Sade,* as a noisy, swirling tempest in a teapot, but without the least meaning. It was not made clear that the asylum director has reversed the order of things, imprisoning the guards and freeing the madmen. Huhu and the Fellah were cut out completely, and the bit with Hussein (a difficult topical reference that should be explained in the program note) was obscured by being taken out of context and by the general hubbub surrounding it. The significance of this climactic scene was totally lost: that only in the madhouse can Peer become the Emperor of Self. He has just sent one madman into the jungle and two others into suicide; to be Emperor of Self means, as Robert Brustein has said, "madness . . . the triumph of the ego over external reality." It also means the destruction of others, as Peer's life, in this scene even more clearly than elsewhere, demonstrates. The mania of selfhood ends in frenzy, and Professor Begriffenfeldt can well pronounce the prostrate Emperor of Self to be *beside* himself. All this is lost on Freedman, and thus lost to the audience. But not only was the cutting of scenes deleterious, so too was the cutting of connecting matter between them. Thus the logical stages by which Peer becomes a Prophet ended up, as it were, on the cutting-room floor; gone too was the meeting between Begriffenfeldt and Peer at the Sphinx, which explains Peer's coming to the Cairo asylum. Lost, likewise, was the important censure of Peer by the Broken Straws for his negative, i.e., undone deeds; this states Peer's guilt most clearly: it lies largely in sins of omission. So, too, does Freedman's.

But Freedman's sins of commission were just as vast. The first of these was actually a sin of both omission and commission. It was the lyrics Freedman wrote to the four longish songs Solveig was made to sing. Ibsen wrote only two very simple and extremely short songs for her, and they were set by Edvard Grieg as part of his score for the play. John Morris's score for the Park production is not bad at all, but it is not Grieg; when a score is as immortal as the play it was written for, it deserves to be revived along with the play. The music for the new lyrics is not bad either; certainly not by prevailing Broadway musical standards. But the lyrics are trash, e.g.: "The endless joy of love,/ It makes the mountains ring with laughter/ And makes the moment that comes after . . ." I couldn't get down on paper what the endless joy of love makes the moment that comes after; but I do not doubt that it was something equally platitudinous. Next, Solveig

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sings: "To wander over a field of longing/ And gather blossoms of belonging . . ." Blossoms are to be found on fruit trees, not in fields, but alliteration is clearly more important than accuracy. "A field of longing" would surely not yield blossoms, or even flowers, of any kind, being a field of unfulfilment; as for "blossoms of belonging," it is an image that belongs in the herbal of a Victorian spinster. And because of these Freedman songs a good scene or two of Ibsen had to be cut!

Already with the very opening scene, the duologue between Peer and Aase, Freedman probed the depths of dullness. The director is mortally afraid of words; however dramatic, poetic, psychologically searching, intellectually stimulating they may be, words are his dreaded enemy, and he either chops them out of the play or tries to upstage them with any kind of business he can dream up. But from this first scene of the first act not much can be chopped and no gimmicks come ready to hand—you cannot, for example, bring the reindeer buck on stage, or have Aase do the tarantella while Peer tells her of his exploits. Moreover, Ming Cho Lee's set was not only aesthetically deficient, it was also functionally extraordinarily unversatile. It did not adapt itself to being other things—an interior, a desert, the sea, a madhouse, a ship, or whatnot—and failed even to evoke what it was most supposed to be, a mountainside. That is what it was meant to be in this scene, a hillside with leafy trees near Aase's farm. We were to see a cascading creek and an old millhouse. Above all, we were to feel the summer heat. But all we got was a set of chopsticks afflicted with rickets and winding up into nowhere.

The costumes, too, were a problem. Theoni V. Aldredge is a good costumer but not, I think, a brilliant one. Given the fact that Estelle Parsons is too young and buxom for Aase, and that her make-up didn't age her either; given the further fact that she was petulant rather than exasperated and exasperating, it was the "little old lady" aspect of Aase that needed emphasizing; instead, Mrs. Aldredge gave her the look of a strapping, almost coquettishly dressed, by no means ineligible country wench. As for Peer (with his wig or hairdo, whichever it was, Keach looked rather like an overstuffed Prince Valiant), he was dressed rather too shabbily and fairly un-Norwegianly—where, for instance, were the puttees? After all, his mother was quite decently gotten up, and she does dote on him. True, his breeches should be torn and he should look dirty, but there should still be the mark of former quality about his appearance, all the more so since Keach found it hard to convey the charm and appeal of the youthful Peer.

What with these visual handicaps, Freedman might have been expected to come up at least with some interesting blocking, and with tempos that build to an emotional climax. There is poetry and character revelation aplenty in this scene, it needs only a good directorial eye and ear to endow it with life. But no such luck. Then with

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the Ingrid scene (II,i), we landed in real trouble. Freedman chose to direct this as farce; as Ibsen wrote it, it is barely even comedy. It is one of those scenes in which spouses (or, in this case, an abductor and his willing victim) torment each other—scenes at which Scandinavians from Strindberg to Ingmar Bergman have excelled. It establishes, on the one hand, Peer's irresponsible, unstable personality —having just deflowered Ingrid, he already longs for Solveig. It also shows, on the other hand, his romantic unwillingness to settle for a perfectly good, middle-class existence—he insists on the ideal, Solveig (whom he will later likewise manage to lose). Freedman, however, had a loutish, boorish Peer running from a heavy, gross, fortyish Ingrid, the two of them carrying on like Punch and Judy. Yet according to Walter Kerr, who was full of praise for this production, Freedman "had the wit to play Peer's first really treacherous act, his seduction of the about-to-be-married Ingrid, as comedy. Because the act is treacherous, it immediately becomes black comedy, the groan at dawn after quite a bad night that is funny because it is so awful and so commonplace." One must admire Kerr's economy: with one fatuous piece of cleverness he can reveal his misapprehension of both *Peer Gynt* and black comedy.

It was with II, iv that Freedman really perked up: bring on the trolls, or dancing girls (or, as he could do here, both) and he is in heaven. But the overrich costumes killed the meaning. Against the set that continued in its paltriness, there appeared, popping out of the Troll King's long train, a procession of monsters. They derived from Bosch, Dali, Tchelitchew: there were creatures with one huge revolving eye, or with a long crimson tongue that ended in claws and served as a leg, or weirdly compounded Siamese troll-twins. As the Greenclad, Olympia Dukakis was made to look even more unprepossessing by the three artificial breasts bursting out of her bodice. And all this in various shades of bilious, poisonous green. Spectacular, yes, but topheavy. Certainly the trolls are eerie and the scene is meant to be fantastic; but it must not overshadow with baroque lavishness everything else yet to come. And the trolls, or at least the Troll Princess, must be alluring as well as garish.

But Freedman does not require a whole scene to wreak havoc; he can do appalling things with single details. Thus after Peer's waltzing off with the three cowherd girls, there is a scene (II, iv) in which our hero finds himself surrounded by glittering, snowy summits; the sight makes him wild and distraught—*yr og forvillet*. Freedman (perhaps misled by Michael Meyer's translation, "dazed and bleary") had him come on all postcoitally tuckered-out from his Lucky Peer act; there were no mountains around, and the soliloquy was cut. We were left with a crass sexual innuendo, which got a cheap laugh from the audience. Again, in III, i, Peer is chopping away at a powerful fir with twisting branches. It can't be all that hard to create such a tree

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on the stage; Freedman, in any case, preferred the easier and "funnier" business of having Peer hack away at a three-foot log, lopped clean of bark and branches, which he was seemingly trying to convert into kindling. The battle with the huge fir fits in with his soliloquy about the marvelous mountain hut he is building; it has no application, except perhaps comic incongruity, to the belaboring of a small piece of horizontal timber. On opening night, this silly bit of business did not even get a meretricious laugh.

One more example: when in IV, vi Peer beckons Anitra to approach, so he can measure her braincase (*hjernekiste*), what did Freedman have Keach do? He had him grab her behind! Big laugh from the audience. The scene is meant to be comic, but under Freedman's aegis brain-humor is reduced to bottom-farce.

Sometimes it was total visual misrepresentation that made mincemeat of a scene. The Boyg is supposed to be an audible but invisible something against which Peer, lashing out in the dark with a branch, comes up short. He seems to collide with an unseen but ubiquitous living wall, whose voice gives him the fatal advice to "go around." This is to become his life-style and undoing. Freedman, however, had some departing trolls from the previous scene fasten one end of a string of colored streamers to the ground, the other to Peer's inert form, so that Peer became, as it were, the hub of a varicolored wheel. When he came to, he tried unsuccessfully to free himself from the streamers. Quite aside from the fact that ribbons cannot be made to say things that an invisible barrier can, the malign "Go around!" which leads to Peer's circumambulation of his true objective, Solveig, did not even make geometrical sense coming from these twirling bands of color.

Most injurious of all, probably, was the outrage perpetrated on IV, i. The Englishman, Frenchman, German and Swede whom Peer is entertaining with dinner were transmuted into an admiral, general, industrialist and diplomat. This is not a serious offense, though Ibsen's satire on the four nationalities is still applicable and a pity to lose. But the scene itself was transferred from a palm grove on the coast of Morocco to a burlesque ship at sea: literally a round washtub with Peer at its improbable tiller. As he related his life story since Act III (important for our understanding of his character), the tub kept bobbing up and down on imaginary waves, and he kept jerking away at the tiller. Meanwhile the four others, reduced to burlesque comics, shot one another with water pistols, and one repeatedly bopped another's head with a slapstick. As a result, we did not really hear Peer's story, but we soon saw the four knocking him out, transporting him to a disk with a mast and a coffer full of gold on it. This was attached to the tub and meant to represent a dinghy; but why Peer would keep his fortune on a dinghy trailing after his yacht, God and Freedman only know. Stripped of his very clothes, Peer

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was set adrift on the dinghy, and forced to row ashore by means of his knuckles, rather as impoverished *cul-de-jattes* manipulate their four-wheeled pedestals. Not only was this scene unspeakably vulgar, preposterous, and confusing, it also clashed disturbingly with the shipboard scene (V,i), which Freedman, conversely and perversely, staged so that it seemed to take place on dry land.

For sheer burlesque horror I commend to you also the Anitra scenes (IV, vi-viii). These were compressed into a single scene, and, as Anitra, Miss Dukakis—middle-aged, obese, and ridiculously gotten up—did a take-off on a belly dance while the dancing girls disported themselves like chorines in a strip joint and the audience bellowed with laughter. In almost no time at all, Anitra had plucked Peer clean, and he was again abandoned in his undergarments. Totally lost was the complex significance of this episode: first, the absurd quest of an aging man for his lost youth in the love of a young girl; secondly, his inability to inculcate a soul into woman, average woman, who sees man only as something to fleece; lastly, the foolishness of a man who purports to vaticinate and philosophize instead of living. Anitra's dance and treachery are not wholly unlike Salome's; the scene, far from being an excuse for campy vaudeville, is a prime example of what Thomas Mann meant when he spoke of Ibsen's *"Poetisierung des Intellekts,"* the ability to render concepts in images.

The shipboard and shipwreck scenes (V, i & ii) were, again, so cut that their entire significance was lost. The flightiness, phony generosity, and cowardice of Peer were excised; the Strange Passenger changed from a herald of death, a *memento mori,* into a meaningless figure; and the Cook, whom Peer causes to drown, was cut altogether. But, you many be sure, we were given a highly picturesque shipwreck: dancers running around under a large billowing blue sheet on top of which Peer and the Stranger seemed to be adrift. Lost was all the bitterness and misanthropy of this scene, which Ibsen is not afraid to vent on his hypothetical alter ego, Peer. There may have been some truth in Max Beerbohm's remark that Ibsen "was an ardent and tender lover of ideas, but mankind he simply could not abide. Indeed, I fancy he cared less for ideas as ideas than as a scourge for his fellow-creatures."

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein admirably identified Ibsen's tone as "the tone of a man possessed by the truth." It is this tone that Freedman managed to sabotage and, finally, destroy. But there is one further problem, one that makes a truly fine *Peer Gynt* in English as good as impossible: the unavailability of a worthy translation. Take such a simple line as Peer's comment on the dancing Anitra: *"Ei! Hun er sannelig lekker, den taske,"* which means, literally, "My she is truly dainty [or "savory," a tasty morsel], the pouch [i.e., wench, as in the English "baggage"]. "Meyer's drearily prosaic translation renders this as "Mm. She's a nice piece of delicatessen, that girl."

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Rolf Fjelde has, "Ah, she's a tasty dish, the minx!" That, if anything, is worse, though it must be said in Fjelde's defense that he tries to reproduce or suggest Ibsen's rhymes, which the other translators generally ignore. Norman Ginsbury offers, "She's a tasty piece of flesh, the hussy." Jurgensen and Schenkkan come up with "Yes, she's delicious enough, the hussy!" None of these versions quite works, even for so undemanding a line. The most recent translation, Peter Watt's for Penguin Books, comes closest: "Ah, but she's really delicious, the baggage!" Yet it, too, sounds unhappily literary.

Here now are the closing verses of the Parson's eulogy from V, iii as rendered by the same translators.

Meyer:

The metal of which God made him rang most true
Until the end. His life was as a lute
Whose strings are muted. Peace to thee, silent warrior,
Who strove and fell in thy small humble war.
It is not for us to search the heart and reins.
That is no task for dust, but for its Maker
But freely I hope and firmly I believe
This man is not a cripple in the eyes of God.

Fjelde:

His inborn note was steadfast as a star.
His life was music, like a muted bell.
So peace be with you, silent warrior,
Who fought the peasant's little fight, and fell.
It's not our place to sift the heart and soul—
That's not for dust, but for the judge of all—
Still I believe—and here it must be said:
This man stands now no cripple to his God!

Ginsbury:

The substance of the inner man rang true.
His life was music played on muted strings.
So, rest in peace, you silent warrior,
Who fought the peasants' little fight and fell.
We will not search into his heart and veins;
That is no task for us but for his God.
But freely, and in all sincerity,
I hope that, as he takes his place before
His God, this man no longer is a cripple.

J. & S.:

His native metal, to the end, rang true.
His life was like a song on muted strings.
And therefore,—peace be with you, quiet fighter,
Who fought the farmer's little war, and fell!

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It's not for us to scrutinize the heart;
That's not a task for dust, but for its Maker;—
Yet I stand here and firmly voice my hope:
Before his God, this man is not a cripple.

Watts:

The metal he was forged from, there rang true.
His life was one long tune on muted strings. . . .
So—peace be with you, silent warrior
who fought a peasant's little war—and fell.
We shall not probe his heart—his inmost thoughts;
that is no task for us, but for his Maker.
But confidently I proclaim this hope:
he stands, uncrippled now, before his God.

What are the salient features of these translations? Meyer's is loose, uneuphonious, unrhythmical; Fjelde's wanders off (there is no Keatsian "steadfast star" in Ibsen, no "muted bell") and the versification is on the singsong side; Ginsbury's is perfect doggerel, the last three lines unutterably flat—not to mention that nine lines are required for the original's eight; Jurgensen and Schenkkan's tends to gloss over, make bland, oversimplify. Watts comes off best, but I do not think that his "one long tune" quite conveys the quality of perseverance to the end, and I rather miss the reference to mortal dust. The last line, however, works very handsomely.

Still, what *Peer Gynt* desperately needs is an Auden or a Richard Wilbur to translate it, and someone other than Papp and Freedman to produce and direct it. I was tempted to write about *Peer* as Shaw did to Ellen Terry: *"It will be done,* if I have to play it myself." But there is better news: Ingmar Bergman, who staged the play in Malmö in 1957 (with Max von Sydow, Ingrid Thulin, Naima Wifstrand, Gunnel Lindblom—brilliantly, by all accounts), has announced that he is making a film of it, in English no less. I could not ask for more.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music Chronicle

THE GUARNERI QUARTET'S PERFORMANCE of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 132 in Sanders Theater, Cambridge, last July confirmed earlier impressions that the playing which in the beginning was completely straightforward has begun to include monkeying with tempo which I find damaging to the performances. The most striking instance this time was the enormous slowing down of the series of half-notes following the series of quarter-notes in each of the statements of the opening section of the great variation movement, with not as much as a *sostenuto* in the score to justify it. I found the distended half-notes impossible to accept each time in this opening section; moreover they couldn't be slowed down in the first variation because the new dotted-quarter-and-eighth rhythm continuing below them had to remain unchanged; and the same thing happened in the second variation. There was another striking slowing down in the finale—this one of bars 166-75, in preparation for the return of the principal theme in its original key. The *espressivo* in the score might justify a slight expansion of the tempo, but not the Guarneri's enormous retardation. And the second movement—which is most effective when the tempo of the opening section is maintained without change in the middle section—the Guarneri performed as always: with an over-deliberate tempo in the opening section, this tempo somewhat accelerated in the middle section, the accelerated tempo retained in the repetition of the opening section and turning out to be the right one in which the section should have been played the first time.

In this sort of thing the Guarneri Quartet is revealing something less than the flawless musical judgment and taste of its peers, the Yale Quartet and the Quartetto Italiano. The Yale, composed of musicians in the Yale School of Music and led by Broadus Erle of the unforgettable New Music Quartet, can be heard only on records—in marvelous performances of Mozart's K.421 and Beethoven's Op. 127. The Italiano, reappearing here this season after some years, has astonished music-lovers with recent recorded performances of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert that have revealed an ability the group didn't have twenty years ago to play this music as superbly as it plays its instruments. (Mercury Records, regrettably, has released here only a few of the performances recorded by Philips in Europe.)

A later concert in Sanders Theater opened with a performance of Schumann's Piano Trio Op. 80, a work I heard for the first time in my more than fifty years of concert-going, and one which turned out to be an accomplished composer's doodling that wasn't worth the

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work it had cost the violinist Alexander Schneider, the cellist Leslie Parnas and the pianist Murray Perahia, and the attention of the audience in the uncomfortably warm hall. Except for the obtrusively loud piano-playing the performance was an admirable ensemble operation, free of the vehemence that distorted not only Mozart's G-minor String Quintet, in which Schneider and Parnas were joined by the violinist Isidore Cohen and the violists Michael Tree and Walter Trampler, but also Dvořák's engagingly melodious Piano Quintet Op. 51.

The gala concerts with which the new Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center inaugurated Alice Tully Hall in the new Juilliard School revealed the hall to be one that transmitted a natural and beautiful sound with sufficient volume at least as far back as row R, where I sat at the first concert. It opened with Bach's moderately interesting Trio Sonata in C, admirably performed by the violinists Pinchas Zukerman and James Oliver Buswell IV, with the cellist Leslie Parnas contributing an audible bass line, and Charles Wadsworth filling in on the harpsichord a harmony that was mostly inaudible even in this moderate-sized hall. Next, the baritone Hermann Prey, who had achieved a delightfully sung Papageno in the Metropolitan's *Magic Flute,* demonstrated in Schumann's *Dichterliebe* that his agreeable voice was not a medium for effective *Lieder*-singing. And as against the excessively reticent playing of the important piano part by the usual accompanist, Mr. Wadsworth's was enlivening to the point of occasional excessive vehemence—notably in *Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen.* Such vehemence was damaging also at certain points in the excellent performance of Schubert's Quintet Op. 163 by Messrs. Buswell, Zukerman and Parnas with the violist Walter Trampler and cellist Pierre Fournier—for example, in the gigantesque crescendos in the sustained opening and closing sections of the slow movement; the exaggeratedly robust lilt of the finale. And at the second concert the Guarneri Quartet's dynamic and expressive overloading of the third and fourth movements of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 130 distorted their shape and destroyed their grace. Another thing wrong at this concert was to have the Beethoven quartet—which the Guarneri elected to conclude with the Great Fugue—followed by a work so inferior and trivial as Tchaikovsky's Sextet for strings, *Souvenir de Florence.* This poor judgment in program-making produced even worse in the group of seldom-heard works for the third concert: Beethoven's Quartet Op. 16 for piano and winds, Rachmaninov's Sonata for cello and piano Op. 19, and Mendelssohn's Piano Trio Op. 66—which is to say, an inconsequential early piece by the one major composer on the program, another such work by a fourth-rate composer, and an unfamiliar work by a skillful minor composer. And a number of programs of this kind were among the sixteen announced for the Society's subscription series.

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What Shaw said about Berlioz—that he was one of those "who are poets and thinkers rather than musicians," but whose love of music causes them to "select music as their means of expression"—was not true of Berlioz, who had great powers of musical creation which happened to be set in operation by his susceptibility to poetic stimulation. But the New York City Opera's production of *Mefistofele* last fall demonstrated that it *was* true of Boito—that he was a man of literary skill and ideas but no creative power in music who, setting his libretto, operated with the mere ability to use the available musical resources of his period competently but not, for the most part, interestingly. The few moderate successes in that use—notably Margherita's *"L'altra notte"* and some of her later phrases to Faust in the prison scene—count for little beside the major failure, the ineffective music for the opera's principal character. Except for the vocal inadequacy of the tenor Arturo Sergi's Faust, the musical performance conducted by Julius Rudel—with Norman Treigle's well-sung Mefistofele and Carol Neblett's agreeable-voiced Margherita and Elena—was good. But the stage production devised and directed by Tito Capobianco was another of those that offer a realization not of what the composer set down as embodying his intention in the work, but of what the director has thought up as embodying *his* idea of what the work is about; and I would object even if the realization —in the scenery of David Mitchell, the costumes of Hal George, the lighting effects of Hans Sondheimer, the direction of Capobianco, the choreography of Robert Joffrey—had been good; but an additional reason for objecting was that they were bad, and therefore a constant irritating distraction.

In an interview a few years ago George Szell, replying to Paul Henry Lang's question about the great conductors of the past, spoke with warm admiration about Nikisch and Strauss. Then he added that there were many others he could mention; and only then that "no one could leave a man like Toscanini unmentioned"—but this, it turned out, only because whatever one might think of Toscanini's interpretation of a particular work (the implication being that his interpretations included much for men of superior musical taste like Lang and Szell to disapprove of) "that he rectified many, many arbitrary procedures of a generation of conductors before him is now already authentic history." By last summer Szell could leave Toscanini significantly unmentioned: an English interviewer reported him as describing himself as "an inveterate and passionate learner," who in former years had gone for knowledge to Nikisch, Strauss, Weingartner, Furtwängler and Walter, and who had also received negative instruction from the bad conductors of those times, whom he left unnamed. In between, in the Bell Telephone telecast commemorating the Toscanini centenary in 1967, Szell again expressed his view that Toscanini's main achievement had been the "ethical"

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one of rectifying the arbitrariness of earlier conductors. And in one of the commemorative articles in *The Saturday Review* he made additional statements which seem to me to call for comment.

Describing the impact of Toscanini's concerts with the New York Philharmonic in Europe in 1930, Szell wrote:

> This was orchestral performance of a kind new to all of us. The clarity of texture; the precision of ensemble; the rightness of balances; the virtuosity of every section, every solo-player of the orchestra . . . in the service of an intepretative concept of evident, self-effacing integrity, enforced with irresistible will power and unflagging ardor, set new, undreamed-of standards literally overnight.

With this accurate statement about the brilliance of the orchestral execution and the integrity of Toscanini's musical operation, Szell created confidence in the accuracy of his perception, the correctness of his judgment, the honesty of his purpose in the further comment which dealt with the musical quality of Toscanini's performances, his conducting technique, his method of rehearsal; and thus got his readers to believe that, as one of them wrote to *The Saturday Review,* he "did not shirk his duty in elucidating a few of the flaws of this genius, who, great as he was, had his share of them." I have no interest in depriving those who need it of the comforting thought that a genius like Toscanini had his share of flaws; but I consider it important to establish that he didn't have the ones Szell "elucidated," and that Szell's statements about these revealed not only his limitations of taste, understanding and mere perception, but his factual inaccuracy. (There is reason to think they represented something else in addition; but I defer that for the moment.)

Thus, while overwhelmed by the orchestral execution in those 1930 New York Philharmonic performances, "we were baffled by certain aspects of interpretation, especially what seemed some relentlessly over-driven tempi"—among Szell's examples being the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh, the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, and No. 5 of Brahms's Haydn Variations. As it happened, Szell, on the Bell Telephone telecast, demonstrated at the piano Toscanini's tempo for the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh—or rather, what he said was Toscanini's tempo, which would have baffled, or more probably enraged, Toscanini, since it was so much faster than Toscanini's actual tempo; and one can hear on the record of the performance with the New York Philharmonic that the actual tempo is not relentlessly over-driven. On other records one can discover the same thing about the Philharmonic performances of the Mendelssohn Scherzo and Brahms variation, and why, though baffling to Szell, they were considered to be two of Toscanini's most marvelous musical achieve-

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ments. And not just in this country: recalling the Toscanini rehearsal with the Vienna Philharmonic that he managed to sneak into in 1933, the violinist Felix Galimir said:

> Then there were the Brahms Haydn Variations; and THAT—WAS—PHENOMENAL! It always was probably Toscanini's best piece; there was that variation with the winds—the fifth variation —so fantastic; that we'll never hear again. Years later in Palestine when we had a dinner for him, and I told him that I had heard this rehearsal, he said very proudly: "You know, Rosé [the old concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic] came to me and said, 'Maestro, Brahms would have been pleased by this.' "

That fifth variation was indeed fantastic, not only technically but musically; and what made it so was not just the speed of the woodwind passages but their seemingly effortless lightness. Galimir, a student at the conservatory, couldn't afford a ticket for the concert; but the chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, Hugo Burghauser, told me that after that fantastic fifth variation the usually sedate audience in the Musikvereinsaal couldn't keep from bursting into applause which interrupted the course of the performance.

Again, though Toscanini provided "a heaven-sent corrective" for the subjective interpretation that conductors had carried to the point of arbitrariness and distortion, it now turned out that "the cure seemed sometimes a little drastic for the ailment," since it ruled out "spontaneous deviation from the pre-established plan . . . the 'spur of the moment,' and with it the grace of the moment." But what Toscanini was concerned with and ruled out was the conductor's deviation from the composer's directions for performance, not the conductor's slight deviations at the concert from the performance he had planned and prepared at the rehearsals; and it isn't true that to rule out the first is equivalent to, or results in, ruling out the second; nor is it true that to eliminate the spur of the moment is to eliminate the grace of the moment: grace, in performance, is not achieved only on the spur of the moment. And if it was Toscanini's own performances Szell was speaking of in all this, the actual performances, again, are on the records to contradict him: they show that although Toscanini adhered to the composer's directions and attempted to produce at the concert exactly what he had prepared at the rehearsals, the performance retained at the concert the grace it had had at the rehearsals—the characteristic grace which no phrase he conducted, at rehearsal or concert, was without. To talk about the grace of the moment being absent from his performances was, then, absurd; and the talk was doubly absurd coming from Szell, whose own performances of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert were wholly graceless.

Toscanini's stick technique, said Szell, was fully adequate for his

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every purpose; and since he could expect "everything in his meticulously prepared performances [to go] the way he wanted," he didn't need what he didn't have—"the rapier-like readiness for emergencies" that Central European conductors schooled in the repertory system acquired through having to conduct poorly rehearsed or even unrehearsed performances. Szell cited the anxious moments during a performance of *The Magic Flute* in Salzburg in 1937, "when the Queen of the Night slowed down during one of her runs in her first aria" and "Toscanini did not give a millimeter," so that "they remained apart for fully five bars", whereas "any *routinier* could have fixed the matter in a bar and a half." Actually, as that *Magic Flute* demonstrated, emergencies arise even in well-rehearsed performances, and in his many years of conducting repertory in the opera houses of Italy and North and South America Toscanini must have had to conduct an occasional insufficiently rehearsed performance; but in whatever performances he conducted in those years he evidently acquired the "rapier-like readiness" for situations like the one in the performance of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto described to me by the violist Nicolas Moldavan, when in the excitement of the concert Heifetz began the Allegro of the finale in a much faster tempo than at the rehearsal, and Toscanini at once adapted himself to it. He acquired also the readiness for the crisis of a different kind in the Salzburg *Magic Flute,* concerning which I can correct Szell's incorrect statements, since I was there too that night. The Queen of the Night didn't merely slow down one of her runs; she went to pieces completely and erratically. And not only did I for years afterwards remember how one had heard Toscanini at once begin to try to get into gear with her changing tempo and manage to succeed after a few moments; but confirmation of this recollection was provided a few years ago by a recording of the broadcast of the performance that I heard at the Library of Congress. (The broadcast was the cause of the incident, Burghauser told me: as the Queen of the Night was singing her aria she happened to think of her family listening to her in a little town in Hungary, which unnerved her.)

Toscanini's method of rehearsal was for Szell "not very efficient or methodical," by which he meant that Toscanini wasn't "very articulate intellectually, and I rarely witnessed an analytical, verbalized instruction." Instead "he would sing a phrase, berate the dull-minded or insensitive, ask angrily for the repeat of a whole section or movement (not always with improvement), and thereafter whip the orchestra into such a state of tension and fear that all of a sudden, magically, perhaps hypnotically, they did exactly his bidding without knowing how and why." For reasons I will come to in a moment, I doubt that Szell observed many of Toscanini's rehearsals in this country; and his description—which left out much that I observed, and specifically the superb efficiency that can be heard in Toscanini's

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rehearsal of *"Dite alla giovine"* on the Musicians Foundation record—revealed his lack of understanding of what he did observe, and what the musicians who rehearsed with Toscanini understood. One of them, Josef Gingold, Szell's concertmaster in Cleveland for some years, expressed the view of all in his statement that "only the musicians . . . in the workshop with [Toscanini] really knew how great he was. . . . It was the wonder of wonders, the things you saw this man do." And Moldavan spoke not only of the "great moments" that one heard only at the rehearsals, but of the way they were produced. The correct instrument, he said, for a conductor to use to communicate his wishes to an orchestra was not his tongue but his stick. Verbalized instruction was something orchestra musicians hated and didn't listen to; and the conductors who talked did so because they didn't have the rehearsal technique Toscanini had—his knowledge of how to get and keep an orchestra's attention, how to give it what he had in him, by which Moldavan meant that Toscanini told the orchestra what he wanted, even in phrasing of detail, not with words but with the movement of his stick, which the musicians were used to and understood and wanted a conductor to use. In this way, said Moldavan, he achieved in two and a half hours what the other conductors with all their talking didn't achieve in five; and sometimes he finished in two. And another NBC violist, William Carboni, explained the method that Szell considered to be no method and described with derisive disdain. Toscanini "was interested in the line of the music; and it would come out by singing: he was singing all the time, and he made you sing on your instrument." And because of this interest there were many times when "we went through a slow movement, and he wasn't satisfied with it and said, *'Da capo,'* and we did the whole thing again, and this time we began to get a feeling of line, of continuity—instead of stopping every two bars, with some conductors." It was after he had achieved this feeling for the whole that Toscanini stopped "for little things—to get them exactly the way he wanted them."

Now Carboni's "stopping every two bars, with some conductors" was a reference to an incident almost thirty years ago which NBC Symphony musicians still talk about. In the *New Yorker* profile of Szell a few years ago there was a statement that after two years in this country, early in 1941, he "got the break he had been hoping for. He conducted the NBC Symphony, with great success, and after that everything seemed to come his way." This, presumably, was the way Szell had told it; but one thing that did not come his way was the second engagement with the NBC Symphony that probably would have followed if the first had been the success he said it was; for actually, though successful in its public manifestations, privately it was an utter failure for Szell with the NBC Symphony musicians and Toscanini. He had been engaged because Toscanini had been greatly

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impressed by the improvement he had achieved in the orchestral execution of the mediocre Hague Philharmonic of that time (Szell's ability as a drillmaster is impressively evident today in the superb quality and operation of his Cleveland Orchestra); and so Toscanini was a benevolent observer in Studio 8H at his first rehearsal of Beethoven's *Eroica.* Szell was dealing with an orchestra of virtuoso caliber which had had four seasons of work with Toscanini and, as it happened, had studied and performed the *Eroica* with him the year before. It was expected that Szell would acquaint the orchestra with the differences in tempo, dynamics and phrasing of his own conception of the symphony; what was not expected was his constant stopping for endless repetitions of short passages "in such a way," said Jack Berv, a member of the horn section, in a letter to *The Saturday Review,* "that we would never know what a number would sound like until the performance." The musicians began to amuse themselves by keeping count of the number of times Szell stopped and the number of times he repeated a passage; but Toscanini was angered by Szell's subjecting this orchestra to the kind of drilling he had given the Hague Philharmonic. Berv was mistaken in his recollection that Toscanini finally rushed up to the podium and berated Szell for this mistreatment of the orchestra; other musicians remember correctly that he rushed out of the studio and waited for the break in the rehearsal to berate Szell in the greenroom. Someone who was in the greenroom on that occasion has told me not only what Toscanini said but Szell's apologetic response—that of a man who desperately needed this first opportunity to conduct a major orchestra in a nation-wide broadcast. One can imagine how humiliating the rebuke and the response were for Szell at the time, and how they must have been increasingly humiliating to recall as he rose from one important position to another and reached his present eminence, where he receives not only the admiration he deserves for producing his marvelous orchestra but tributes he does not deserve for his performances of music with that orchestra—notably Winthrop Sargeant's statement that Szell is "the Old Master, the guardian of tradition, the vehicle for its communication to the present generation of conductors," and "his performances resemble those of the late Arturo Toscanini more closely than those of any living conductor." The outstanding members of the present generation of conductors —Giulini, Colin Davis, Boulez—did not receive any such tradition from Szell; and I cannot think of performances less like Toscanini's, with their plasticity and grace, than the steely, graceless performances of Szell. However Szell thinks it was Toscanini's performances that lacked the grace of *his,* and agrees with Sargeant's high estimate of him; and this would be enough to produce his published condescension to Toscanini. But he has an additional reason; the humiliating experience in 1941.

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This 1941 experience produced also Szell's statement about the NBC Symphony—that it was "not an orchestra in the sense of an integrated organism," but "rather the finest collection of virtuosic players money could assemble," which "left more than a little to be desired." This suggested an operation very different from the actual disciplined and precise playing, breathtaking in its energy and fire, in the first years; and it omitted mention of the "integrated organism" which the years of working with Toscanini made of the orchestra. (I still remember the rehearsal in 1951 at which Toscanini began the first run-through of the Prelude to Act 3 of *Die Meistersinger* and, arriving at the chorale-like passage for the brass, got from the players, the very first time, chords whose blended sound was like that of one instrument.)

I consider it as necessary to correct the misstatements about Toscanini as those about Musorgsky—first, because it is something one owes this genius as one does the other, and also because the misstatements have had damaging consequences for this one as for the other. Rimsky-Korsakov's allegations of Musorgsky's technical incompetence, to justify the vandalism he perpetrated on Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov,* have caused the Rimsky falsification of *Boris* to be performed to this day in the world's opera houses in place of the Musorgsky original—which is as though El Greco or Cézanne or Picasso had completed only one great painting, and the world had been able to see not the original masterpiece but some academician's prettied-up copy of it. And with Toscanini the misstatements increase the danger of what would be analogous to the El Grecos or Cézannes or Picassos in museums being withdrawn from public view. For the recorded performance and the record company are analogous in music to the painting and the museum; and from the beginning the record companies have talked about their preserving the art of the great performers for future generations. But actually they have preserved a great performer's art only as long after his death as his records have been bought in quantities the companies have considered sufficient to justify production and the retailers to justify space on their shelves; and actually the public has bought for the most part the records of the performers in whom its interest has been stimulated by reports of their activity in the press—which is to say, the living performers, not the dead ones. As I write, Angel has discontinued all the recordings of Artur Schnabel's pre-war performances of the sonatas and concertos of Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert—which means that these uniquely great performances will soon be unknown to all but a very few music-lovers. They were discontinued because they were not being bought by what Angel and the retailers considered enough people; and they were not being bought because the public read not about Schnabel but about the pianists active today. And not just the great pianist-musicians like Cliburn, Gould and Ashkenazy, who

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deserve the public's interest, but someone as patently undeserving of it as Barenboim, about whom the public has been told by reviewers here that he plays with the maturity of someone twice his age, and by reviewers in London that the 15-year-old Barenboim's performance of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata some years ago was as good as had been heard in this century, and his performance of Beethoven's Op. 111 not only could be compared with Schnabel's but was more interesting.[1] Because of these nonsensical statements Angel has been recording Barenboim's performances of Beethoven's 32 sonatas and Mozarts concertos and the public has been buying them in preference to Schnabel's. As for Toscanini, interest in his records declined after his retirement and death; it nose-dived with the advent of stereo recording; and whereas it was not affected by Virgil Thomson's attacks when Toscanini was alive and active, it has been affected by the writing about him since his death: in his lifetime the way a critic showed his perception was to elaborate on the accepted Toscanini perfections; now the way he shows it is to elaborate on invented flaws. The fact that RCA has all but stopped releasing the re-edited Toscanini recordings on Victrola records indicates that they haven't sold well; and there is a real prospect that insufficient sales will eventually cause Toscanini's records, like Schnabel's, to be discontinued and his performances to become unknown to most music-lovers. This makes it important to correct Szell's misstatements, and also Sargeant's, which could lead people to think that by acquiring Szell's recordings they would, in effect, have performances like Toscanini's in stereo sound.

What makes Sargeant's statement remarkable, I should add, is that

[1] The statements by London reviewers were quoted in an English journalist's article in *The New York Times Magazine*. In a letter which the *Magazine* didn't print I said the statements demonstrated "that in the slinging around of impressive words unrelated to the unimpressive facts the English reviewers can hold their own with the Americans," and the entire article demonstrated that English journalists also could produce "the publicity and promotion stories masquerading as articles" with which reputations are built up nowadays—e.g. Emily Coleman's *"Big Brother" Watches Over Tanglewood/Erich Leinsdorf, known as fierce taskmaster, is now in charge of the Boston Symphony and everybody's happy: Boston, Leinsdorf, audiences, students and musicians,* and Martin Mayer's *Mr. Bing Makes the Met Go,* both published in the *Times Magazine* some years ago. (It's interesting that the improvment in what the *Magazine* has published since it was freed of Lester Markel's control hasn't extended to music: on this subject one still finds either the rubbish of the paper's music critic or disguised publicity material like the stories about Leinsdorf, Bing and now Barenhoim.)

In the belief that the Barenboim career is depressing to others besides myself I pass on the heartening report by a musically experienced friend on the response to Barenboim's performance in the Brahms D-minor Concerto at the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico last May—that "he *hit* the piano and *hacked* at it so dreadfully that afterwards people began to call him Boing-Boing." And whereas members of the London Symphony are impressed by his conducting, the superb musicians in Casals' orchestra disliked their rehearsals with him "because he talked and talked without telling them anything useful, and his conducting was hard to follow."

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he is, unlike his colleagues, a thoroughly trained professional musician who, as it happens, played in the New York Philharmonic with Toscanini a couple of seasons—someone, that is, who had an opportunity to get to know as only a participant could the plastic shaping of the music, the sensitive phrasing and rhythm, the grace that were characteristic of Toscanini's performances, and who could therefore be expected to recognize the striking dissimilarity of Szell's steely, graceless performances, however beautifully executed by his superb orchestra. Trying to account for Sargeant's failure to recognize this, and for other failures of his, has led me to some thoughts about critical judgment and taste which I will have to postpone.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir:

With reference to William Dickey's review of my book, *Love Poems,* I have a few things to say. I have chosen not to write reviews, so I can only imagine Mr. Dickey's predicament. As a critic, he should be given the widest possible latitude. The fact that he does not like my work is really none of my business, nor is it any of my business how he feels about women. However, I do take exception to the fact that he reports that I have chosen a picture for the back of my book that has tears in it. At first I thought he meant tears as in rips, and I did examine my picture for jagged edges; then I realized he meant tears as in lachrymose. I turned to my picture again, and there I found a wrinkle. There was also a mole. Surely he will leave me my

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moles and wrinkles as well as my uterus. I was happy when that picture was taken. And I would not be so bathetic as to pose while crying. Never mind the thought of choosing a tearful picture! For your readers' edification I would like to say that *Love Poems* is a book of exchanges: one of communication, one of joy. I cannot defend its imagery, but I can defend its intent. Surely Mr. Dickey needs a pair of prescription glasses.

I am happy, God damn it, and I won't be seen as otherwise.

ANNE SEXTON

Weston, Massachusetts

Dear Sir:

Anne Sexton has gracefully and quite accurately put me in my place; it's my business to consider the poems and not the book-jackets, and I ought to know enough not to give way to peripheral temptations.

I can only say that I didn't set out to invent the tear: it looked and looks to me as it it is there, and I thought about it and looked at it a long time before I said anything. My wife would like me to say that she sees the tear too—so perhaps the question is not, as Miss Sexton suggests, one of rudimentary sexual antagonism.

I don't think I have seen Miss Sexton's poetry as unhappy simply because I require poetry to be unhappy: the images of terror and destruction are too frequent for that: there is an emotional force I am obliged to consider. If Miss Sexton's intention is to represent joy, it is in my reading a shadowed and partial and ambiguous joy; my sense of that ambiguity was involved in my comments on Miss Sexton's picture.

But in that light happiness is a real accomplishment and I envy and grant it to Miss Sexton, and am myself happy to remove what becomes an entirely metaphorical tear.

WILLIAM DICKEY

San Francisco, California

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GEORGE DIMOCK

The Way Things Are

OLD MEN DIE IN THE SPRING. We lost Rolfe Humphries in April at the age of seventy-four, but not before he had completed perhaps the greatest of his contributions to contemporary civility.[1] His *Aeneid* had for a long time been the best there is for the general reader but now he has surpassed that achievement with his translation of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura.* That poem, much neglected for lack of a sufficiently readable English version, need be neglected no longer. Humphries' translation is not merely readable but inspired, and it should make apparent to everyone that Lucretius has as much to say to us as any poet in the tradition.

But there has always been a prejudice against Lucretius: witness the following entry in St. Jerome's *Chronicle* for the year 94 B. C.:

> Titus Lucretius the poet born. Driven mad by drinking an aphrodisiac, between bouts of insanity he wrote several rolls of verse, which Cicero later edited. He died by his own hand at the age of 44.

This could be more or less true, but it could also be merely inferred from Lucretius' poem, with one slight piece of assistance from Cicero's letters. Lucretius proclaims Venus as the sole ruler of the world and our lives, and a Stoic or Christian might well believe, or pretend to believe, that a man who could say that must be under the influence of an aphrodisiac. To discover the horrible consequences of such views and such habits, it was only necessary to look at Lucretius' luscious picture of the futility of physical passion at the end of the fourth book. To the prudish and the innocent that passage could seem, or be made to seem, the words of a man himself driven mad by sex. How convenient for the champions of religion, whose influence Lucretius is avowedly out to destroy! They could, and evidently did, claim that the poem was the product of an insane mind. There was not even any difficulty explaining how a madman could get himself published, for the letter of Cicero's which we mentioned shows that he had Lucretius' manuscript in his hands and much admired it. Writing to his brother

[1] LUCRETIUS: THE WAY THINGS ARE. The *De Rerum Natura* of Titus Lucretius Carus, translated by *Rolfe Humphries.* Introduction by Burton Feldman. Notes by George K. Strodach. Indiana University Press. $6.50.

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Quintus he says, "Lucretius' poems are all that you say they are: full of the fire of genius, yet with great art. But more when you come." This was evidently enough for critics to conclude that Cicero edited the poem and had it copied, Lucretius himself being incompetent if not already dead. Is not the poem even as we have it now manifestly disorganized in spots and unfinished? This in turn leaves us with just the impression which Jerome's notice does, quoted above: doubtless "Lucretius the poet," his eye in a fine frenzy rolling, was capable of some beautiful lines, but we need not bother about his doctrine. Such coherence as it has is likely due to Cicero's kind editorship. Even Lucretius' alleged suicide may have come from this sort of speculation. What advice would Lucretius himself give to a sex-crazed madman? The answer is obvious: kill yourself. One of the main points of the poem, as we shall see, is that death is not to be feared but regarded rather as a refuge.

So we can only too easily deduce Lucretius' suicide from his poem and all in all it does look as though Jerome's biography is just malicious or romantic gossip. On the other hand, as we have said, all this scandal may be true: the madness, the suicide, even the aphrodisiac, but the poetry does not prove it. It does not even prove a neurotic preoccupation with sex and death such as some modern critics have seen in the poem. There are good as well as bad reasons for making Venus the supreme deity, while the tirade against passionate love is to be explained as at once a confirmation of the Epicurean-Lucretian theory of reality and a demonstration of the benefits of knowing the truth about the way things are. This, I think, accounts for its vehemence, rather than any peculiar twist in Lucretius' mind. It fits his poem; it does not distort it.

Venus first. Lucretius found in the philosophy of Epicurus what he thought was the secret of human happiness. His poem is at once the celebration of this discovery and an invitation to his fellow Romans to share in its benefits. In brief, the discovery was this: everything in the universe, everything that exists and everything that happens, is the result of the fortuitous combinations and dissolutions of an infinite quantity of atoms in infinite space. No over-all purpose, no ordering or control is involved. The gods, if they exist at all, being perfectly happy would not disturb themselves to interfere even if they could. To realize that this is the way things are should make us happy. First, nobody up there is watching us. What we do is our own affair, and we need not worry about supernatural approval or disapproval. The consequences of our actions will be natural and mostly forseeable, and we are free to pursue in our own way those easily obtainable goods on which happiness depends: the moderate satisfaction of bodily wants and a mind free to take delight in the life we live. In the course of nature misfortunes do occur, earthquakes, disease, and the like; but these too we can accept with a quieter mind, realizing that they are

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just random events, not evidences of our own nastiness and helplessness. There is no mighty sentient power before which we must quail, as the religious imagine so fondly and so fatally for their peace of mind. This is the first of the two great freedoms which Lucretius says Epicurus bestows upon us. The second is that we need not fear death at all. The reason is that our consciousness is part of the organization of our body. It cannot exist apart from it, is born with it, and dies with it. Therefore we will never have to experience that thing we so dread, our own death. We are relieved of Hamlet's fear, "to sleep, perchance to dream"; of this dreaming there is no possibility at all. Thus Epicurus and Lucretius seek to remove from our minds a great weight of deluded responsibility and fear. The universe doesn't care a hoot what we do, and whatever we do, our lives will end in a peaceful sleep. Indeed we can end them ourselves whenever the pain outweighs the pleasure.

Attractive as this picture is in some ways, the comfort Lucretius draws from it would seem excessive if it were not for the pervading presence in the poem of Venus, all inadmissable as she is according to Epicurean theory. If we look at the philosophy analytically, ignoring those famous opening lines, "Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas,/alma Venus, . . ." we might as well despair as hope. Birth and death are equal and opposite. No combination of atoms lasts for long, not even our world with its sun and stars. Everything dies. But Lucretius accentuates the positive. After all, the atoms are eternal, and will recombine; so the conservation of matter becomes a subject for lyric:

> Finally, when the fathering air has poured
> His rainfall into mother earth, the drops
> Seem to have gone, but look!—bright harvests rise,
> Boughs on the trees bring greenery and growth
> And are weighed down by fruit, by which, in turn,
> Our race is fed, and so are animals,
> And we see happy cities, flowering
> With children, and we hear the music rise
> As new birds sing all through the leafy woods.
> Fat cows lie down to rest their weary sides
> In welcome pastures, and the milk drops white
> Out of distended udders; and the calves
> Romp over the tender grass, or wobble, drunk
> On that pure vintage, more than strong enough
> For any such experience as theirs.
> To sum it up: no visible object dies;
> Nature from one thing brings another forth,
> And out of death new life is born.

Birth is what Lucretius looks at, and what Venus means. "Genetrix" is the second word of the poem, "Creatress" the first of Humphries'

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translation. We may object, and many have objected, that it does not remove the fear of annihilation from us merely to point out that we won't feel a thing; but actually we are offered a second and greater consolation. "What's so bad about *your* annihilation," Lucretius says, "so long as something else is created? However short your time may be, you will have had your seat at life's feast, and in comparison to eternity you will have done as well as anyone. Why not be thankful and depart?"—and he does make it seem that we can take delight in the mere fact that things are born and not worry overmuch that they cease to be.

More than this, Venus is not only *genetrix;* she is also *voluptas.* Atoms combine and dissolve again, and that is our world, but is it not a piece of good fortune that they combine so joyously? The atoms are infinitely numerous, and they move in infinite space and time, but since they have only a limited number of shapes, only a limited number of combinations is possible. This is why things occur in certain definite ways and not in others. The replenishment of animal bodies for example, and animal reproduction, though it might have been otherwise, have turned out to take place under the impulse of "our guide to life,/The radiance of pleasure." Accordingly, Lucretius seems right to begin his poem as he does, by invoking the great goddess of Love and Pleasure:

> Since you alone control the way things are,[2]
> Since without you no thing has ever come
> Into the radiant boundaries of light,
> Since without you nothing is ever glad,
> And nothing ever lovable . . .

It just so happens that things are glad, and are lovable, and that to come into the light is good. Creation holds the field. Mars the destroyer figures only in that he ". . . more than once has come,/Gentled by love's eternal wound" into Venus' embrace. War ends in peace, amity, and concord. We can see that in this poem the reverse, peace gives way to war, is not equally true. Existence comes from concord; disruption and dissolution are merely concord's negative aspects. The shapes of the atoms are such that Venus, and Venus alone, rules the world. Who then can be unhappy?

Lucretius, contemporary of Caesar and Cicero, lived in a terrible time. It is no mere literary device when he asks Venus for peace for the Romans so that he can write "with a calm mind" and they can listen. His prayer was not answered and his poem was not finished, but he did enough to let us see how he hoped by means of it to mitigate the struggle for wealth, power, and military preeminence with which his times were cursed. If people only knew the way things are,

[2] Here I follow the Latin in putting a period after the last line on page 19 and a comma instead of a period at the end of the first line quoted, the first line on page 20.

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he says over and over, they would see how little life requires for happiness; neither wealth nor military might ever freed anyone from fear of the gods, feelings of guilt, or the fear of death; yet it is these fears and feelings which more than anything else cause the struggle for wealth and power. By ridding them of their "terrors and darknesses of mind" Lucretius sought to turn his fellow citizens from preying on each other to the noble vision of reality and the quiet life implicit in the philosophy of Epicurus. Who can say that his idea was not a good one?

So it does not seem insane of Lucretius to celebrate Venus, but what can we say about the seeming attack on her in the fourth book, in which he accuses her of consuming her lovers in futility? The fourth book, as it turns out, is not so much about sex, though it ends with sex, as it is about the filmy images, themselves made of atoms, which all objects are constantly throwing off and which become both the source of our perceptions and the content of our consciousness. In the case of falling in love, images of the beloved function like Cupid's arrows, but with this advantage for explaining the phenomenon: they are real and material and can physically affect the lover. Even dreams, Lucretius reminds us, can bring a man to orgasm. Thus this atomic theory lets us understand for the first time how the sight of a pretty face causes such a commotion in the human male, as his seed presses towards ". . . the source of the mind's wound./All things tend woundward: does not blood spurt out/In the direction of the blow?" And we can explain not only the attraction of passion, but its futility, as we have already seen. The images can excite, but being incomparably less substantial in their make-up than food and drink, they cannot satisfy. To be sure, this part of Lucretius' lesson may not make us very happy, but at least we understand, and his theory seems doubly confirmed. Besides, if he is right, there is a remedy. If we are in love, it is not through divine malevolence, Venus' or any other god's, but from physical causes which we can get at. The thing to do is to reduce the seminal pressure and break up the flow of images from that one fatal form by the interposition of others. If loving other girls doesn't work, it may help to entertain images of the one girl when she is at her least attractive, engaged in body-care, say. Disillusion yourself, take her down off her pedestal. Then, if she is a good sort and doesn't resent it, forgive her her defects. You are out of danger. So the atomic theory tends to cure the ills of passion as it does the other fevers and follies of men, by understanding, by debunking, by showing that there is nothing mysterious involved. Lucretius paints his lovers in such desperate straits because of his urgency about the efficacy of his theory and not because he suffered from a fatal passion. A good many of his nights after all were spent in reading Greek and writing Latin.

Here too, Lucretius is able to celebrate Venus Creatress. Lovers cannot satisfy themselves with images, but they can by creating children.

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Thus the depiction of futile passion proceeds to consideration of the female orgasm and its role in conception and inheritance—another apparent confirmation of Lucretius' theories. With this transition he is able to end the book with a discussion of the best means of child-getting from an atomic point of view, leaving us in no doubt about what Venus is really for. Once more the atomic "nature of things" has shown us what is really important, in sex as in the other departments of life.

Just as Lucretius is not particularly neurotic on the subject of love, neither is he about death. Those twenty-six enthusiastic proofs of the mortality of the soul in the third book are not a case of protesting too much, but rather designed to assure us of the comforts of dissolution, secure in the knowledge that the universe will carry on under the guidance of Venus—not the anthropomorphic goddess of the religionists but the great creative principle which alone controls the way things are, without which nothing has ever come into the radiant boundaries of light, without which nothing is ever glad, and nothing ever lovable. In fact, what has been taken for neurosis is really poetry, and with Humphries in hand I think we can dispel at one and the same time both the neurosis theory and the erroneous though widespread impression that Lucretius' poem is not a poem, but obsolete science versified. True enough, an explanation of the working of the universe, insofar as it is just an explanation, is prose whether phrased in meter or not; but to celebrate the way things are, or to celebrate them while explaining them, is poetry. This is what Lucretius is doing, and Humphries is able to convey the effect admirably. Here is one example, of a point which otherwise expressed might have been mere scientific argument:

> Besides, if all the space
> Of all the universe were fixed, enclosed
> By definite bounds, by this time all the mass,
> The weight, of matter would have run together
> From all sides to the bottom, tending downward
> From the sheer force of weight, so there could be
> No room for action under heaven's roof,
> No heaven, for that matter, and no sun,
> Since all material would be heaped so high
> From its long subsidence through endless time
> But as it is, no rest is ever given
> To the atoms' rainfall; there's no pit, far down,
> To be their pool, their ultimate resting-place.
> All things keep on, in everlasting motion,
> Out of the infinite come the particles
> Speeding above, below, in endless dance.
> By nature space is deep and space is boundless,
> So that bright shafts of lightning could not cross it,

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Given eternal time, nor could they lessen
The area before their onward course.
There is too much space, all here and there, around them,
No limit to that infinite domain.

This is enough to show that what we have on our hands is a poem brilliantly translated, even before we reflect that much else is celebrated besides the dance of the atoms. That "much else," we have been trying to suggest, is nothing less than the liberation of the human spirit through reason and knowledge.

Some people will object to Humphries' colloquialisms here in Lucretius as they did to those in his translation of the *Aeneid,* but I am emphatically in favor of them. He knows what he is translating: in his foreword he writes of "the tone—that wonderful high sustained peremptory aristocratic address to Memmius and to ourselves." Indeed he says that it is that value which he has most tried to preserve. It is also clear that he wants his translation to sound alive, the way real poems sound. In other words he wants to use his own personal "high sustained peremptory aristocratic" language, and that includes colloquialisms, even slang. Reading this Lucretius, one hears Rolfe Humphries explaining the way things are in a language and a tone of voice that we can enjoy, love, and honor, and short of the Latin I can't think of a better way to do it.

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ROGER SALE

Its Discontent

"AND YOU WANT TO TRAVEL with her, and you want to travel blind," writes Leonard Cohen in "Suzanne," and thereby he becomes a pied piper among the beautiful losers of youth. Invent a character, have an idea, start to tell a story, and then go anywhere at all with it, blind.[1] It isn't that because nothing is forbidden anything is possible—that's pretty much old hat to the kids. It is, rather, that there are places really worth getting to, experiences really worth having, and they can be reached one way as well as another; all you do is just go. Earl M. Rauch calls his book *Dirty Pictures from the Prom,* but it's not like that at all. It's about what it is like to be the younger brother of one Creynaldo, who died at age seven, the author of many fancy poems and some arty-dirty books: "I am the brother. I am the other. I am the past. I am the last. I am the memory and the conscience of myself, more she and she and he than me, and the historian of the dead and those yet to live." You may be able to take those sentences seriously and still write a whole book, but what will probably happen if you do is that the brother/other will end up on a bed, being seduced by a dwarf/wrestler, listening to the voice of a dead girl friend tell him how Creynaldo is running strongly in an election against God. And that he'll also be seduced on a bus ride to Houston by an adolescent polio victim. Which is some traveling, but when the driver is that blind the riders don't get to see much either.

Rather in the same line, but with *Herzog* for model instead of Leonard Cohen, is Miles Eric Ludwig's *Golem.* Because Ludwig is in his twenties, Golem is a graduate student rather than a professor, and his wife is not grand or bitchy, just monosyllabic. But still, she sleeps with his best friend, he flees to New York for some consoling warm sex, and for Herzogian reflection:

> Follow Golem on a hand-held tour of New York: one day. First, up to the Frick where one can pretend that one is a noble Roman, reclining in the solarium, bathed in organ music. Imagining himself playing polo in what was now a room for meeting pretty girls, bumping into people with leather-covered cameras draped over their resigned shoulders. Wandering through the great halls as if he were on a treadmill placed in front of a perspective drawing with a never-ending vanishing point. Moving toward, but never to, the horizon. Surrounded by Hollywood echoes, the kind that reproduce the entire word rather than only the last syllable.

[1] DIRTY PICTURES FROM THE PROM, by *Earl M. Rauch.* Doubleday. $2.95. GOLEM, by *Miles Eric Ludwig.* Weybright and Talley. $6.95.

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Golem is better than *Dirty Pictures from the Prom,* as the quotations probably show. But in both all gestures outward, towards love, forgiveness, imagining others, are constantly turned off by that narrator chattering away at himself, drooping back into self-pity and cuteness.

As a matter of journalistic interest, let it be noted that some older experimenters this term can be much worse than these.[2] Rauch and Ludwig do enjoy their own imaginations and so inevitably show some verve and wit, but it's hard to know what can be said for or even about Eugene Wildman, editor of *Experiments in Prose,* when he says "the tape recorder makes potential really new structural ideas," and "possibly the most exciting item . . . in this entire volume is the opening tape transcription" of various human sounds made last summer in Lincoln Park during the Democratic convention. Or for Michel Butor, when he tells us how to handle his aimless dialogue: "If the right-hand channel is entirely closed, Chris and Delia can be heard when they are at right, but very softly; Arthur and Bertha disappear. Do not attempt to give an accent to the Negroes. Do not attempt to put any lyricism into the 'readings' of the flowers; only a discreet erotic contagion." Pure moonshine, surely, as befits something as solemn and about as contemporary as a Dada painting or a poem of Harry Crosby's.

Ronald Sukenick too is older than the kids, and he too horses around with some tape transcriptions, but at least when he says to a class of superhips, "The contemporary writer—the writer who is acutely in touch with the life of which he is a part—is forced to start from scratch: Reality doesn't exist, time doesn't exist, God was the omniscient author, but he died," he knows he is speaking cliches and that the kids aren't listening.[3] Which is why the title story in his collection, *The Death of the Novel,* is the best programmatically experimental writing of the season:

> It was all one long today for Junior. He had neither nostalgia nor anticipation, neither regret nor dread. Soon Junior found himself completely isolated. . . . People would nod to one another knowingly and tap their heads when he passed. There goes Junior, they would say, he thinks it's today. Junior languished and withered. He was already dead to the world, and the world dead to him, entombed in today. When he actually died, he died, unlike other people, on a day on which he had never died before, and on which he would never die again.

Mere vignette, spinning out a simple notion, nothing discovered but rather announced, but those are sentences, and you can't write them by fooling with the stereo. Like all the other high speed stuff, Sukenick

[2] EXPERIMENTS IN PROSE, edited by *Eugene Wildman.* Swallow. $10.00. NIAGARA, by *Michel Butor.* Regnery. $7.95.

[3] THE DEATH OF THE NOVEL AND OTHER STORIES, by *Ronald Sukenick.* Dial. $4.95.

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does not want a reader really to judge, only to say if he did or didn't like it. I liked this, and think furthermore that while Sukenick will never write the first good traveling blind novel, he may well be the first one to spot it when it comes along.

Ivan Gold's *Sick Friends,* though not at all likeable, is worth more than Sukenick's book because he is willing to work a lot harder.[4] He too is unabashedly autobiographical, and also about a New York writer who now and then gets up and gets dressed. But where Sukenick is gamey, Gold is gloomy, where Sukenick is entranced with words, Gold is usually just wordy. Given the onrush of almost 400 pages of a one-person novel, it is hard for Gold to write convincingly about his hero's writer's block. Nor can he do much with the heroine, who seems to exist to provide sexual problems for the hero:

> The other party she gets fat letters from, guy with a deaf wife some years his senior who has two children by a Negro ex-husband and whom he brings lovers home for (the wife) they once had a pet rabbit but he killed it and skinned it and hung the hide from the front door, name of Donald, I mailed one to him for her in the long ago, wants to be a writer, would seem to have enough material, she knows from her part-time computer days, has surely sometime fucked, let us suppose him to be (or else go mad) the man who knocked her up the first time.

That is *not* a sentence, and the one right after this is worse, the whole book maddening. But for the occasional reader willing to use his eyes like a machete Gold offers rewards. Once inside the jungle that is the style and the hero's mind, the anguish can begin to seem real, to use that term of praise we are assured by Rauch, Ludwig, and Sukenick exists only as a word.

Leonard Gardner's *Fat City,* to finish up with the first novels, is the best of the bunch.[5] Gardner's advantage, at least for this one book, is that his landscape, Stockton, California, has not become the sea of words New York so obviously is. He writes straight, no highjinks narrator, no great length, about two part-time boxers whose lives cross and don't quite work out. God does not exist here either, nor does plot, nor smarmy self-consciousness:

> Waking again to the faint sound of music, the motor silent, only Babe and Bobby gone from the car, the others sleeping, Wes saw a low building in the fog with *Regal Pale* glowing in blue neon in a window and was overcome with dejection. He had made no secret of his training. Acquaintances at school spoke to him as though they believed he was a professional, and he had not cared to correct them. He had believed he would be one soon enough—because it had

[4] SICK FRIENDS, by *Ivan Gold.* Random House. $6.95.
[5] FAT CITY, by *Leonard Gardner.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.50.

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seemed the natural and inevitable thing for so many years, because against all contrary evidence, and simply because he was himself, he felt he could never be dominated. Now he felt he should have known all along he was nothing. Boxers were men in other towns, in big cities far from this car parked in the darkness alongside the highway between fields of vegetables. Resting his cheek against the cold window, he thought of killing himself, but years ago, standing beside his father's legs in a crowd on a night sidewalk, he had seen a dead man profiled in a puddle of blood, his eye dumbfounded, and Wes knew that if he was going to be killed, he was not going to do it himself.

Wes too is only a vignette, but Gardner will try to make him part of the fictional reality of the world, not an authorial whim. It took Gardner four literary fellowships to finish this short novel, his genius probably lies with stories, and Stockton, once done, seems hardly in need of doing again. No matter, many people will like *Fat City,* and with good reason.

Next, some reprints.[6] Two, I fear, reappear twenty years after publication because someone wanted to show the young that people have had their thoughts before; "timely" say their dust jackets. Still, for any kid not trying to be timely, it turns out he could do far worse than these. George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* is a decent effort by an unimaginative man to imagine what happens after some mysterious disease wipes out all but a few people. It was written in the shadow of the first gloom cast by Hiroshima, and is as relevant now as it was then, which is not very, because the abiding of the earth is only an abstraction for Stewart, something to be charted. *Joe Hill,* by Wallace Stegner, a fictional biography of the Wobbly song writer, suffers from the same faults but is quite a bit better. Stegner can't see or understand much about Hill, but he is thoughtful about the past, and that can count for much. The trouble is that this very thoughtfulness, which gives the air of someone trying to make graveyards speak, also works against Stegner. He does not know if Hill was guilty of the murder for which he was finally executed, so scrupulously stays outside his hero—and sees him woodenly.

Two collections of scraps by much more famous writers go back even farther for their material. There are enough admirers of both Ernest Hemingway and Isaac Babel that anything either wrote should be published, but the results here are middling to piddling. The Hemingway is four fictional dispatches sent to *Esquire* during the Spanish War,

[6] EARTH ABIDES, by *George R. Stewart.* Houghton Mifflin. $5.95. JOE HILL, by *Wallace Stegner.* Doubleday. $6.95. THE FIFTH COLUMN AND FOUR UNPUBLISHED STORIES OF THE CIVIL WAR, by *Ernest Hemingway.* Scribner's. $4.95. YOU MUST KNOW EVERYTHING, by *Isaac Babel.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.95. THE COLLECTED STORIES OF PETER TAYLOR. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $10.00.

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padded out with his play of the same period, *The Fifth Column*. Leonard Gardner writes better Hemingwayese than we have here:

> We both drank. The water tasted of asphalt and pig bristles.
> "Wine is better," the soldier said. "I will get wine."
> "Yes. But for thirst, water."
> "There is no thirst like the thirst of battle. Even here, in reserve, I have much thirst."
> "That is fear," said another soldier. "Thirst is fear."

These were written to make money for the war effort, and one must not cavil, but they are not fun to read. The Babel, *You Must Know Everything*, consists of nineteen tiny things, mostly sketches, a few stories, one apparent beginning for a novel, padded with studious introductions and notes by his daughter and with reminiscences and exhortations about him by other Russian writers. The mystery and terror surrounding Babel's later life, the genuine (but not, surely, great) achievement of the stories in *The Lonely Years*, seem in themselves to make admirers find these fragments admirable. They aren't. Babel's depth and range were too small for him to be able to achieve much when not at his best.

Altogether more substantial, for obvious reasons, is *The Collected Stories of Peter Taylor*. The world has passed Taylor by. The small towns and cities in the hinterland between the Atlantic and the Mississippi that are his métier have now been spoken for by Spiro Agnew and his boss; the comfortable, stable, and unhappy people he writes about seem almost never to have lived; the style that never calls attention to itself could seem impressive mostly to those surfeited with Faulkner and Warren. But he still is with us, beautifully unchanged; it would be hard to put these stories, written over a thirty-year period, in chronological order. His characters are now more absorbed in the past than they used to be—"A Spinster's Tale" and "Reservations" are about kids while "Dean of Men" and "The Other Times" are about older men remembering—but the world is, throughout, small college campuses and roadhouses and front porches and country clubs. What animates a Taylor story is such a slight event, such a small quirk of self, that the landscape must be solid and easily seen for the key, minute point not to be lost. But this very stability of setting, not just of landscape but of social structure and attitude, finally has the effect of rendering the event very close to irrelevant. This is of course not what Taylor wanted, and it would be nice to think that his imperviousness to change is the mark of one in tune with more eternal verities. But no—in small doses Taylor is good, but even then he never escapes seeming precious.

Yukio Mishima's *Thirst for Love* is not a reprint but an early novel recently translated.[7] Mishima does the kind of thing Peter Taylor does,

[7] **THIRST FOR LOVE**, by *Yukio Mishima*. Alfred A. Knopf. $4.95.

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and almost always does it better: "To some people living is extremely simple, to others it is extremely difficult," he says, showing or reminding us that Taylor's people have an easier time than Mishima's, and he takes it easier along with them. "Against this unjust balance," Mishima goes on, "more striking than the injustice of racial discrimination, Etsuko felt not the slightest rancor." Etsuko is a young widow, kept by her elderly father-in-law, who becomes obsessed by and finally kills a young peasant boy. Mishima's genius is to be able to register the pain of knowing that for some life is much easier than it is for others while also exploring the strange psyche of one who feels not the slightest rancor about this unjust imbalance. It is not a great work, and part of one's admiration for it derives from knowing *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion,* which Mishima wrote right after *Thirst for Love* and which still seems just about the best novel Dostoyevsky ever wrote. Taking the two books together we can see Mishima reaching for some way to generalize from the violent, speechless pain of his characters. He hasn't quite got there in *Thirst for Love,* but almost.

Finally, we have the four novels of the term which most novel readers will read because they are written by well known people who unquestionably write novels and have at least once in the past made the form both alive and their own.[8] Two seem to me honorable and interesting failures; one is the latest in the English Lady Novelist Sweepstakes, that genre where it is so hard to say better or worse or even good or bad; the fourth is an old man finishing his masterpiece. In all the discontent is prominent, crucial, but even in the least of the four there is a resonant civility to make us think life worth thinking about and novels worth writing.

John Fowles writes a kind of claptrap, because he is too busy thinking up ways to write novels. In *The Magus* it is very high class, in *The Collector* it is the opposite, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* it is somewhere in between. This is a huge book because it tries to be both a Victorian novel and a commentary on Victorian life. At times it seems that the commentary is not so bad and the novel awful, but at others Fowles makes the novel almost work and the comments are embarrassingly vulgar. Certainly for two thirds of its length the mix is dreary mostly because while Fowles has thought well about Victorian life he never quite understands the Victorian novel. He tries to get along without villains and melodrama, not seeing why Dickens and Collins relied on them, and so leaves himself with the worst of the Victorian furniture: mild hero, pallid heroine, mysterious femme fatale. So both lovers and haters of Victorian novels will give up sooner than they should. Here is what happens when things are going badly,

[8] THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN, by *John Fowles.* Little, Brown. $7.95. A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE, by *Richard Yates.* Alfred A. Knopf. $5.95. THE WATERFALL, by *Margaret Drabble.* Alfred A. Knopf. $5.95. THE ESTATE, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.95.

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when the story is cement and the commentary silly: "He could not imagine what, besides despair, could drive her, in an age where women were semistatic, timid, incapable of sustained physical effort, to this wild place"; "Sam fell first for her because she was a summer's day after the drab dollymops and gays* who had constituted his past sexual experience," this latter followed by a note to the asterisk defining dollymops and gays. It couldn't be worse, especially when it goes on like that for pages at a time.

But even in this Fowles *means* to keep a good tension between then and now, and if he were a more careful or intelligent man with words a lot of the worst could be avoided. Then, a hundred or so pages from the end he comes to something—a Big Scene and some surrounding commentary especially—that almost justifies the whole venture. The hero has seduced or been seduced by the femme fatale and, because he is a gentleman, he decides to break off his engagement. The woman unexplainably flees, he tries to find her, fails, resorts to travel, returns to London and finds the fatal woman in Chelsea, in the *menage a X* of the Rossettis. Here Fowles is at last released, clear that the wild and shy lady who wanders lonely cliffs, etc., really is on her way towards emancipation. She is no pre-Raphaelite whore, no lesbian, but she will not be defined by the men she knows. The hero at least glimpses all this, is perplexed, attracted, furious. The Big Scene really works as a scene, even when the woman introduces the hero to the daughter that is the wages of their spasmodic clutch; in all this Fowles can show us history and the sexuality we inherited. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is, thus, stumbling and gauche and much much too long, but curiously attractive too.

Richard Yates's *A Special Providence* demands less comment, but is not therefore less good. Yates's *Revolutionary Road* was a very good very awkward first novel; in his second he comes close to ridding himself of the vices of the first, but discovers, alas, some new ones. His hero is a callow young man gone to war in Europe late in 1944, his heroine is the boy's mother, who wanted to be a superior sort of sculptress but who became merely arty, victim to snobs and fools, an overprotective mother, an incipient alcoholic, herself snobbish and foolish. The idea is that the mother's stifling energy and will to love finally and in despite of themselves liberate the boy and allow him to see the war not only as unheroic but not really about himself, allow him in the end to desert her. What is very good is the young man at war: Yates can take the blurred events called "capturing a village," make them clear and keep the blur too; he can show both the pettiness and the necessity of the tests soldiers give themselves; he can show how decisions soldiers make about each other are both crucial and trivial. Here the writing is better than anything in *Revolutionary Road.* What's wrong is the mother and therefore the structure of the whole. For all that he flaws her, Yates cannot keep the parts about the mother from being a hymn to the undefeated, and he just hasn't the Tolstoian tal-

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ent to bring it off; her disasters are a little too standard, her buoyancy too pat and obvious. Still, this cannot harm the best parts, and they are very good indeed.

Margaret Drabble is the current English Lady Novelist, the one you have to read now as you had to read Iris Murdoch ten years and Elizabeth Bowen thirty years ago. Those who claim *The Waterfall* is her best so far are right as long as they concede she is doing wonders with very thin material. The story is both standard and dreary, an affair that does and doesn't come off, and Miss Drabble can do nothing new with it outside of having the lovers survive the ritual automobile accident. Throughout, though, and especially in one truly stunning meditation in the middle, she knows how to be sensitive, careful, and brutally honest about her heroine, and in general she writes better about women than anyone I know now writing. The section I mention is too long to quote more than in part; it is about the real and metaphorical effects of childhood games on maidens and women as they choose and are chosen:

> Did I protest against the game in case I was the game's victim? Were my scruples nothing more moral than a selfish terror, born during some period of instruction in the art of the Viennese waltz, when I was the twenty-ninth child out of twenty-eight? It's possible, for my blood still runs cold at the notion. Did I marry because monogamy, cruel though it may be in its initial selection, seemed safer, more honorable, more innocent, than endless choice and endless realignment, in which the victims could merely lose more and more often, and the takers more often, more surely, take all, take each other, take all? Better a bad match and stick to it than to form a part of the endless snatch and grab. Better to be nothing, better to weep by the wall, the twenty-ninth child. Better to lose than to endure the guilt of winning; better to lose than to be a capitalist of the emotions, staring down from one's guilt-constructed office tower at the hurrying throng below. This is what I thought. I protest the virtue of my renunciations: I could have chosen, I was a reasonably endowed woman, not a natural pauper, I could have chosen the other way; and perhaps after all I only allowed myself to lose so badly because I knew that I held in my concealed hand a trump card, and that at the end of the game I would fling it down, the ace of hearts, gaping red, and that James would fall into my arms and die there?

That is not only lovely writing, it also allows me to see what in other books and contexts many others have been trying to say. A classic moment, more than enough for a quarter's fiction were it not for Isaac Bashevis Singer.

When *The Manor* appeared two years ago I wrote that it seemed rather curiously both a masterpiece and a novel that didn't quite make clear where it was heading or where its sequel might take it. Now

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comes *The Estate,* which, by the way, simply cannot be read by anyone who hasn't read *The Manor* first; the break between the two books is only a convenience and Singer begins this second book moving among his many strands of family and story, assuming we have all read the first volume. "*The Manor* begins with the Polish uprising against the Czar in 1863," Singer says in a note, "and *The Estate* ends in the last years of the nineteenth century—an epoch when humanism undertook to practice what it had preached for generations." There are very few new characters in *The Estate,* and many of those important in *The Manor* are dead, aged, or lost, and this allows Singer, while he continues to spin the webs of the lives of his enormous cast, to show what he wants mostly in two characters: Clara, Calman Jacoby's second wife, who betrays Calman near the end of *The Manor* and who here in turn falls victim to the worst of her needs to love, be loved, and to recriminate; Ezriel, now clearly a version of the Singer of *In My Father's Court,* a Warsaw ur-psychiatrist who watches the collapse of his wife whom he does not love and will not leave, who becomes entangled in the needs of his mistress to become assimilated socially just as he had originally needed to become assimilated intellectually. Even with *The Manor* behind it, *The Estate* has some slow stretches near the beginning, but recovery comes, when it does, fully and triumphantly, first with Clara as she goes to New York to find the lover she earlier rejected, then with Ezriel as he finds his life in tatters and returns home for Rosh Hashana. Singer has some of the same difficulties with Clara that Richard Yates has with his heroine/mother—the ultimate triumph of the indomitable—but whereas Yates tangles himself in long episodes which can show only that once again mama has failed and survived, Singer is eager and able to show that someone who sees and knows as little of life as Clara does is mostly just lucky if she lands right side up:

> She should never have dared to say all those terrible things to Calman, or to be unfaithful to him! And since she had been in love with Alexander—what had been the sense of becoming involved with Mirkin? In all her cleverness, she had disregarded life's most elementary rule: do not do unto others what you would not have others do unto you. But would she be able to redeem herself? Should she return to America, throw herself at Alexander's feet and tell him she could not live without him?

That, by the way, would not only be pointless, she doesn't even want to do it:

> Sasha had written that his father was ill. Perhaps she should find some charitable work to do; helping the sick or the poor?

Clara is about as able to do *that* as Mrs. Onassis:

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> Clara's thoughts swayed in rhythm with the waves. Often Madame Bachrach sat with her, embroidering a tablecloth and relating stories of her relatives, of doctors, of spas. Once such tales would have bored Clara. But now she was interested in Madame Bachrach's anecdotes and even asked for more details.

Singer's fineness lies precisely in the way that Clara's ability to be interested in Madame Bachrach is both the result of the idleness and bankruptcy of her thoughts about herself and also the first time she has ever been interested in anyone else. She can thus return to Warsaw and achieve, while making irrelevant the question of deserving, reunions with husband and son, a touching offer of marriage from a misogynist, and quiet death.

Only then does Ezriel begin to loom large and to engage us in everything important in "an epoch when humanism undertook to practice what it had preached for generations." I would like to quote some passages, all from the last twenty pages, to show how Ezriel and Singer see history and themselves coming down to us:

> He had fled because his life was not turning out well. Would it be more fulfilled here? What would he do when everybody returned home after the holidays? Why had he come in the first place? Had it been to escape estrangement, impiety, a daughter who hid a revolver under her mattress, a wife who arranged balls for lechers and oppressors, patients who deceived their husbands and wanted only to have more enjoyment at someone else's expense? Or to find the way to a mute God whose nature is unknown, whom one does not know how to serve, and even whether any service rendered him is appreciated. He, the Almighty, had kept silent in times of idolatry, slavery, wars, plagues, tortures. He had disposed of all men in the same fashion: those who worshipped Him, and those who rebelled against Him. On the other hand, if God did speak, what would happen to free will? His father, peace be with him, had been right: God cannot reveal His purpose if good and evil, faith and denial are to remain hanging in the balance.

Then, on Sabbath night, the saintly rabbi tells Ezriel: "As long as the soul dwells in the body, it can never be totally sure of anything. . . . The body is a vessel for pain. That is why it rebels."

Ezriel returns to Warsaw, and on the way is with a crowd of Jews on the train:

> During the train's long wait, they shouted, ran about from one car to the next, became entangled in their long capotes, behaved so boisterously that the Gentile passengers laughed at them. Ezriel heard one Pole say to another: "A wild rabble, eh? . . ." Yes, here they were a rabble, but, only an hour before, they had been priests in a temple. Would the world ever understand this? They were com-

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> pletely lacking in that ornament the Gentile world called dignity or pride.

And Ezriel then goes out into that Gentile world to see its dignity, pride, enlightenment, and not just in gloomy Warsaw but in the West. He writes back to Zadok, an enlightened Jew:

> The Alps are magnificent, but the philosophy lectures that I have heard here in Bern and in Zurich are just as tedious, pedantic, and false as the wisdom dispensed in Warsaw. . . . Here, in Western Europe, I have seen what I have known for a long time: that the person who estranges himself from God seeks only an opportunity to hate. . . . Official Germany is permeated by an obsession for conquest, while France is consumed with a mania for revenge. Both are united in contempt and envy of England. Europe is full of plans, but all of them demand human sacrifice.

So:

> When one gazes at the Talmudic scholars, one actually sees eternity. What is Berlin to them? What is Paris? How wonderfully they have isolated themselves amidst all this madness! They do not even know that they are in Europe and that we are at the end of the "magnificent" and bloody nineteenth century. In their Houses of Worship, it is always the beginning. . . . I can deny God, but I cannot stop being a Jew.

There is, one knows, little new in these assertions, as assertions, but there need not be. Behind them lie seven hundred pages of dense human living, and the history one sees is only the history that that living creates. What is forced upon us, as it is on Ezriel and Singer, is the realization that however much we gaze upon those for whom "it is always the beginning" we are not they and probably would not be if offered the choice. Ezriel is an intellectual, Singer is a novelist, God is still mute, the body is still a vessel for pain, history is not saving but it is all we know, the novel not the Torah (or the tape recorder or the dirty picture from the prom) is how we know our discontent. I wish I knew better how to praise this marvelous work.

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Passion Among the Polyglots

THE NEW NABOKOV, by the time this notice appears, will have become safely the old Nabokov. Having briefly challenged *Portnoy's Complaint* on the bestseller lists, *Ada or Ardor*[1] will have settled down to the enduring recognition which is the best hope of a "modern classic" —the cumulative nibbling of the commentators, occasional invocation as a standard of comparison, inclusion on lists of assigned reading made up by "contemporary" instructors in large universities. In a bad season for good novels, it will have been bought, if not read, by almost as many of the citizenry as a Bernie Geis fruitcake; and it will certainly have made a place for itself as the climax and summary of an extraordinary literary career. Since Nabokov has never taken any special "ground" for his own, except that surveyed by the volatile, capricious imagination, one can't say that *Ada* breaks new ground; but it summarizes and recombines familiar themes with a zest and bravura particularly stunning in a man who has been writing fiction for better than forty years. If *Lolita* was Nabokov's Mozart period, and *Pale Fire* his Schumann, *Ada* is pure Brahms, in the sense that it can make even a sonata sound like a symphony. Like some of the last poems of Yeats, it brings forth ancient antinomies to make new discords and harmonies with them, combining Russia with America with Europe, the 19th century with the 20th with the 18th, cruelty with *tendresse,* sensuality with erudition, naïveté with cynicism, sapphires and sewage—one could go on.

Levitation is a nice theme to start with: Nabokov has always been a man dizzy with the idea of flight, and all his books are declarations of independence. High up in the attic or cockloft of the 18/19/20-century Russian/Canadian/American country house known as Ardis the early part of the novel discovers an interesting contrivance known as a jikker. It is a blue magic carpet with Arabian design and useful hawking-tubes; a family heirloom, it can be cleaned and clandestinely repaired by a local mechanic in order to transport our youthful hero and his still-more-youthful mistress over the roofs and at a safe ten-foot altitude across the fields and down the lanes and byways of Ardis. They play with it for a couple of sentences, and great good fun it is—grand for swooping down on unsuspicious pedestrians or reaching, for a quick tumble, secluded nooks among the irregular

[1] ADA OR ARDOR: a Family Chronicle, by *Vladimir Nabokov.* McGraw-Hill. $8.95.

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roof-structures of Ardis. But then it disappears. The law of gravity is inviolate everywhere else in the novel; the jikker plays no part in the story, it is a toy to be played with, described, and then cast aside except for casual mention and recollection. Cast aside by the author, that is; cast aside in the sense that there's no need to use the device in a practical way. But the jikker continues to zoom, glide, and flap in the reader's imagination; it's been invoked so easily and dismissed so casually that any equivalent whim can evidently suspend, any time the artist feels like it, any of the laws of verisimilitude in his fictional universe. Airy agility is very much the style of *Ada;* our hero is a dexterous brachiambulant, or handwalker, for whose sake gravity is always ready to take a short vacation, and an intricate paragraph on pp. 184-185 explicitly connects this exercise with the working of literary imagination. Our heroine is a devoted tree-climber, an Eve with a natural love of snakes (*"J'adore tout ce qui rampe"*), and her first sexual encounter with young Van takes place high in the leafy branches of an Edenic appletree. Their affair, which is the central action of the book, takes place in the teeth of familiar and perilous obstacles, which their supreme *chutzpah* miraculously causes to fall away. With the greatest of ease, they float and skate across the thinnest of all possible social ice; physically, linguistically, socially, emotionally, they tremble on the verges of all the abysses their author can imagine for them. And yet they float or fall with the free, stylized formality of trapeze artists, always with immense open spaces about them for adroit maneuver. Having got rid of verismilitude in the meat-and-potatoes sense, the novel exploits with immense abandon the elastic resources of language, the exuberant power of things to pun upon and parody one another. Like the world of Gogol, that of Nabokov can run very quietly on conventional tracks for quite a while before suddenly ballooning into gross absurdity or gyrating off down a track of insane and uncontrollable associations. His characters must be equilibrists to hold their own; so must his reader.

Pattern-freedoms of this sort are usually bought at the expense of depth. The characters in pop-novels, as elaborately flat as *art-nouveau* figures, caper and scamper mechanically through their routines; and if they have any inner existence at all, use it as a target to perforate with arrows of absurdity. But Nabokov is romantic, as no other novelist of his generation has dared to be; like *Lolita, Ada* is the story of a disease, absurdity, or aberration which bears at its heart a core of beauty, a kernel of love. They are words one hardly uses any more, in a literary discussion, without embarrassment; Nabokov himself cauterizes them continually with exact observation and astringent overtones. But the erotic story of Van and Ada Veen is an account of "prodigious individual awareness," directed precisely to love and beauty; it is so described by Ada herself, in a momentary eloquent intrusion on the narrative which turns abruptly into an apologia:

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> . . . among those billions of brilliant couples in one cross section of . . . spacetime . . . one couple is a unique super-imperial couple . . . in consequence of which . . . the peculiarities of their love-making influence in a special unique way two long lives and a few readers, those pensive reeds, and their pens and mental paintbrushes. Natural history indeed! Unnatural history—because that precision of senses and sense must seem unpleasantly peculiar to peasants, and because the detail is all: The song of a Tuscan Firecrest or a Sitka Kinglet in a cemetery cypress; a minty whiff of Summer Savory or Yerba Buena on a coastal slope: the dancing flitter of a Holly Blue or an Echo Azure—combined with other birds, flowers, and butterflies: *that* has to be heard, smelled and seen through the transparency of death and ardent beauty. And the most difficult: beauty itself as perceived through the there and then.

Love and beauty, then: they continually flash out, unashamed and eloquent, from the interstices of a novel which is abundantly busy about other things. It is an outdoor French farce, for example, which converts most of the Northeastern United States, Estotiland, Norumbega, and the Maritime Provinces of Canada including Arcadia (all contaminated by a certain amount of White Russia) into a piny boudoir for the exercise of its indefatigable young lovers. It is an exercise in cross-lingual puddlejumping, with all sorts of little games being played (rather indistinctly, on occasion, for this reader) in Dutch, Italian, Greek, and no doubt Finno-Ugric, as well as English, Russian, French and German—the whole mixed up with an *olla podrida* of private jokes, symbolic allusions, multilingual anagrams, and numerical puzzles for careful calculators. It is a parody-romance, in which the hero-narrator represents himself as a dashing blend of Ivan the Terrible, Cagliostro, Scaramouche, Casanova, Peter Schlemihl, the Scarlet Pimpernel, and Beau Geste; while the heroine need be no more than a twelve-year-old Eve with a professional knowledge of entomological taxonomy and a fluent command of four languages and their literatures.

A good deal is made in the book of the 19th-century background. Much of the action is dated about a century ago, and there are vague references to 19th-century events like the Crimean War, though of course this is all nicely mixed up with contemporary (1969) styles, habits, properties, and modes of thought. But in its sexual style, the book is 18th century, not 19th or 20th. Nabokov doesn't really have much use either for the firelipped *femme fatale* who summons to a *liebestod,* or for the squalid, indiscriminate ac-dc coupling of which so much modern fiction consists. His *ancien régime* is not pre-Bolshevik, but pre-Bonaparte; his lovers (though amply promiscuous) are yet lovers, though not helpless victims of passion either. (It's not bigger than both of them; either of them is bigger than it.) They are assured and confident players of the sexual game—the Vicomte de Valmont on

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one side, on the other side perhaps a lepidopterous Lamiel. And yet, for one another, they are, they continue to be, they will always be, lovers.

It was Stendhal, I think, who popularized if he did not invent, what we can call the key-club novel: it's a style of fiction which imposes various tests on the reader (in the form, generally, of repellent situations to be understood, odious actions to be accepted, without defence) before he is admitted toward the elusive and continually-withdrawn inner sanctum. The happy few are not being invited by the author to join the club: quite the contrary. Clods must be kept out, because they wouldn't enjoy the show themselves and would spoil it for those who do. So the main thing is to keep out the clods. Of course, if you think you can qualify (and you can do so by passing the test, by granting a sympathy that's not easy), then perhaps you may be one of the lucky ones. So *Ada* in its dealings with the reader; so the central characters of the book in their dealings with the other characters. They are a unique, super-imperial couple (they tell one another, and us); if we don't think so, we're peasants, and unfit to participate in the cenacle. In other words, a condition of their glorious freedom is that they are satanically cruel snobs, and know it.

A good deal of the considerable cruelty in *Ada* is masked by some very funny comedy, and successfully masked too. Ada and Van, hampered and discommoded by a particularly odious set of clownish pantaloons and innocent imbeciles, exercise their rascally pre-adolescent wits in baffling and eluding them; and in this exercise our sympathy is all with the kids. How many times, in how many new postures, under what perilously unstable circumstances, can they manage to elude the stupid censor's prim eye? But they are also saddled with the company of the heroine's little sister, Lucette; and their efforts to shake or silence or bribe into complicity this precociously curious infant are ingenious, specious, elaborate—and very funny indeed. Only little Lucette in due course falls predictably in love with Van, pursues him determinedly, and finally, after he has repeatedly rejected her "advances" (funny word in this *anno domini*), she commits suicide. Ada, wise after the event, says quite accurately to Van, "we *teased* her to death." They did, they most assuredly did—and though they may not have known what they were doing at the time, the reader can hardly have been unaware. Indeed, as one looks back over the career of our "unique, super-imperial couple," it seems to be littered with corpses and burnt-out cases. They are very tender and considerate of themselves and one another, these glorious people; they are quite ruthless with those who, for one reason or another, don't count. It's the 18C style again—but seen this time from a not wholly complacent, a somewhat soiled and guilty point of view.

There are emphases in the novel which could imply very serious reservations in the author's attitude toward his happy couple. The

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great "L" disaster (it seems to have involved a moral reaction against electricity! but could also be a "Hell" disaster) not only dislocated time and space within the book's cosmos, but moved the sphere of events into Eden or Hades, perhaps with the first—as in Proust—shading into the second. Russian AD, as we're repeatedly reminded in the course of the novel, is the word for hell (hades), the male parent of Ada and Van is known as "Demon" Veen and outfitted with various Satanic epithets, and "this world" is often referred to as one of torment and trial, from which one is released to return to "Terra." This whole upside-down vision ties in with Van's upside-down handwalking (which is artistry), and the magic carpet of imagination, which inverts like a mirror. It includes, again as in Proust, a sense that love and beauty are deeply rooted in cruelty and destruction. Is the action of the book a flight or a fall, or rather the former in the context of the latter?

As often in Nabokov fictions, the passion of the protagonists is inflamed by inordinate obstacles placed in their path. Ada and Van are children (he legitimate, she illegitimate) of two sisters by the same father; the basic taboo is therefore incest, and in an early chapter, half-erudition, half-nightmare, incest is ballooned into a series of grotesque and macabre consequences. But on the narrative level, it seems somewhat strange to have the indiscriminate, wolfish father who produced this tangle of genetic intimacy assume Victorian attitudes (which the children, who respect nothing else, feel bound to respect) toward its consequences. Even more arbitrary and uncharacteristic is the decision of Ada, just when about to be united with her enraptured Van after years of separation, that she must nurse her *nebbish* husband through the terminal seventeen years of a suddenly-acquired case of tuberculosis. Verisimilitude and consistency, in characters like these, are of course out of the question; but one can't help feeling the separations of these lovers to be a little *voulu*. It's a novelistic inconvenience into which the author has fallen precisely as a result of his characters' general responsibility and independence. Hence too the indeterminate quality of the blot or smudge of guilt which lies just over the horizon of our (as of their) consciousness.

This business of the smear, the smut, the *tache* is a Nabokov theme of some relevance. It takes physical shape, it may be an image of disgusting particularity, but it is burned into the consciousness too, and its name is humiliation. There is a crucial image in *Lolita* of a used, unflushed urinal with a cigarette butt floating in it, that expresses the ultimate in self-loathing; there is an image in *Ada* of a clear mountain brook with a used condom tangled among the water-grasses, that has something of the same effect. It's tempting to improvise on these Joycean themes. Sex is writing dirty on a clean page, or a page that the writer's ignorance/innocence enables him to suppose clean. But ultimately all sexual handwriting is superscription and yields palimp-

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sests. Feeling is falling is fouling is telling, and multiple contamination is the first principle of Nabokov's world of words. The name of the guardian angel who stands over Nabokov's private garden of delights is Rohrschach.

If the themes of *Ada* are themes of fall, the style is pure Proustian flight. Sometimes, out of main impudence, the subordinate clauses are flung about every which way, to click together in the reader's mind, as the serpentine sentence finally reaches lazily over its back to sink its teeth unexpectedly in its own tail. Inanimate objects writhe wildly into life, and innocent words proliferate through a whole series of enclitics, diminutives, and cognates: ardis, ardor, ardora, ladore, ardilla, ardelia, adiana, ardillusian, aardvark. Nouns get pursued through the European languages, apparently for the sheer delight of their transformations: Veen is "peat" or "turf" in Dutch; a village near Ardis, "La Tourbière" means "the peat-bog" in French (and the servant Blanche, a simple peat-digger's daughter, lives there); while "Torfyanaya," with which Ada triumphantly wins a game of Scrabble, is Russian for "peaty." When so impelled, the Nabokov prose can clatter and click like a Rube Goldberg contraption being operated at twice its normal speed:

> Next morning, he happened to catch sight of her washing her face and arms over an old-fashioned basin on a rococo stand, her hair knotted on the top of her head, her nightgown twisted around her waist like a clumsy corolla out of which issued her slim back, rib-shaded on the near side. A fat snake of porcelain curled round the basin, and as both the reptile and he stopped to watch Eve and the soft woggle of her bud-breasts in profile, a big mulberry-colored cake of soap slithered out of her hand, and her black-socked foot hooked the door shut with a bang which was more the echo of the soap's crashing against the marble board than a sign of pudic displeasure.

The passage is most remarkable for the variety of motions that it weaves swiftly together: her gesture of rising like a stalk, his arrest, identified in a flicker with that of the porcelain serpent and thus instantaneously Satanic, the wordless "woggle" of her breasts, the treacherous fall (slither) of the soap (its mulberry color—what color *is* mulberry?—identifies it with sexuality via a vulgar Latin pun, and cute little Lucette later uses a piece of the same mulberry soap to impersonate Van in the bathtub)—and the rude slam of the door, followed by the notion of his mind moving meditatively to surround and cradle her movement, and soften its meaning. The entire unit resembles another in *Lolita*, where the nymphet is being carried off to camp by her red-rubber-lipped mother, escapes momentarily to embrace dazed Humbert, and then is torn away with a slamming and reslamming of doors, a shriek of tires—while an amazed and nearsighted neighbor rocks and gapes mechanically from her porch.

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And while we are admiring special Nabokov effects in the prose, let us not overlook the impish ingenuity which twists haunting lines of poetry into multiple, reverberant misquotations:

> Oh! qui me rendra ma colline
> Et le grand chêne and my colleen!

Not to mention the occasional superb counter-euphemism, for example, in the sentence where Van turns to say good-bye to Lucette after her longest, most anguished effort to seduce him: "He thrust his hands into the warm vulvas of her mole-soft sleeves, and held her for a moment on the inside by her thin bare elbows" (p. 386); or the superb account of Ada's hands, which occupies pp. 58-59 with an eloquent reprise on pp. 104-105. (I assume the extraordinary passage on Ada's scratching of mosquito-bites has already been discussed to the point of fascination or revulsion before every potential reader.)

Has there ever been an English novelist in his sixties capable of writing three fascinating pages about a woman's hands? Neither the multiplied acts of intercourse, a pseudo-erudite vocabulary against which Ada herself protests, nor a somewhat cute attitude toward "delightful little whores" carries as much conviction of deep sexual feeling as these intent, precise pages describing the arms, hands, eyes of a girl.

The book has its flaws and they are easy enough to enumerate. As already remarked, the novel's motivation may at crucial points appear contrived; another indulgence is an involved and extraneous description of an international chain of expensive brothels, through which Van Veen pursues fading images of his Ada, or else just the satisfaction of a ventral itch. No doubt the Venus Villa Club is an agreeable fantasy, but it's not particularly relevant to the rest of the book. And finally, there's a good dose of Van Veen's philosophizing on the topic of Time, especially in the latter part of the book, which it's likely even the best readers of this romance will find heavy going. Time is not a topic which under the most favorable circumstances lends itself to formal disquisition; the informal auspices and *dégagé* style of Professor Veen—not to mention the somewhat fanciful *point d'appui ontologique* that he assumes—render it hard to be serious enough about his lectures without becoming over-serious. The novel, in a word, is not without awkward and tiresome moments (those I've stressed become particularly apparent on a second go-round); but one can't say this without immediately reiterating that it's a stupendous and delightful effort of the imagination. After reading it one wanders for weeks through a landscape of skybab squirrels in shattal trees, with urgent hydrograms arriving over convenient dorophones, with leaves-droppers concealed in the liriodendrons, and some dreamy fellow in the background murmuring excerpts from Mme. Réan-Fachinski's treatise *On Contraceptive Devices* in translucent, hilarious, outspoken Kapuskan patois.

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If one can manage it without sounding either portentous or elegiac, the publication of a major novel by a great novelist on the eve of his seventieth birthday invites to summary and retrospect. The most extraordinary thing about the career has evidently been its sustained imaginative vitality. All the literary careers one hears about have got off the launching pad with their Stage One, but how few ever manage ignition at Stages Two and Three! Simply calling the roll of American Nobel laureates for literature makes the point: it sounds like a roster of burnt-out cases. But the issue goes beyond jealousy over the "honors" (where, to be sure, it's now an open scandal); it goes, in a sense, beyond literature, for these carefully sharpened senses, this restless inverted imagination, this immense appetite and disgust for life, are only on the periphery of a career of letters. One has only to compare with the recent M. Gide to see the difference. Nabokov is an artist, not an esthete; a taxonomist, not a nature-lover; a mad scholar, not a wry flâneur. Part of his achievement may very well derive from the simple quantity of his interests and information. The languages cross-fertilize with one another as with the bug-lore; real geographical and historical details twine happily with fantasies and burlesques. The sex-business, which is so popular these days as a pathway to popularity, mingles with a love-business which is very hard indeed to bring off—which (perhaps) only a novelist who had made some private side-bets with Tolstoy would even try to perform. And the whole thing is managed with that gift for specific detail, precise diction, and exact evocation which we haven't seen since Joyce.

The special quality of his intellectual venture is what makes Nabokov so exciting a novelist; it's also what makes him hard to place in a tradition or among contemporary groupings. The interlingual novel is bound to be an eccentric venture, thank heaven; one shudders to think of its exotic gardens disappearing under the shuffling feet of "creative writers" from our larger universities. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that this novel, which floats in the free space between languages and develops forms with a freedom unfamiliar to the earth-bound, represents (at least for the moment) a fictional frontier. It is thus, like *Finnegans Wake,* a great eccentric venture of the imagination, to climax a great eccentric career. Yet, when they have mass and poise enough to justify their existence as universal objects, what centers do artists need except themselves?

American literature, which seems to have been moping for a long time over the question of whether it's better to have experience or not, certainly has little claim to Nabokov; and the Russians, who in their current intellectual mood would disown the novels of Lord Lytton as degenerate, left-wing, cosmopolitan documents, aren't likely to lay claim to him for a long time yet. So perhaps literary historians will wind up putting Nabokov with Joyce in the history of Swiss literature. Seeing them out of customary linguistic contexts may challenge us to see them whole; and that's a task, not to speak of a pleasure, likely to keep us occupied for some time to come.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

A Fine Messed-Up Life

"A CAREFUL READING OF 'DOSTY' ought to prepare one's mind to handle any human situation comfortably that ever might arise. . . ." Hart Crane's comment to Gorham Munson records his enthusiastic response to the author of *Crime and Punishment:* enthusiastic and playful too, as it imagines an untroubled application of art-wisdom to life. Yet Crane really meant it; he had made "Dosty" his own at age 22, thus could sally out to handle with ease his parents, Grace and C. A. Crane—or as the homely phrase for all boys has it, Moms and Dads. In 773 pages John Unterecker has told the disastrous, or gloriously disastrous, tale of the life which resulted;[1] but at the outset, then in conclusion, he makes this disclaimer:

> My search was for the man. But I found no more of him than Hart Crane himself found of the girl his grandmother had once been, the girl whose love letters had faded in an attic over the course of too many years until they were brown and soft—"And liable to melt as snow."
>
> Like Crane himself, I had tried to play "old keys that are but echoes."

And early along in the book Unterecker is moved to ask the following evidently unanswerable questions:

> What biographer—however meticulous his search—can hope to locate in the thousands of casual acquaintances a man makes, the imperative voice, the important word? We play games with our mothers, our fathers, our wives, our children, and, sometimes, ourselves. Who doesn't withhold his profoundest convictions from nearest and dearest, yet spill them out to a stranger on a bus, a scrubwoman leaning on her mop?

The temptation to say "I don't" was strong at this point, though it's undeniable that Crane spilled the beans all over the place and that some of the main beans involved Moms and Dads. But perhaps the biographer's impeachments are too soft, the writing at these points in the book too lyrically melting, since there is little indication elsewhere that he is deeply troubled by a failure to get down the man as he really was, so had to settle for old keys that are but echoes. Nor are there many moments when he seems to be of two minds about a poem, an action, a remark of the poet's. Which is not to say that

[1] **VOYAGER: A Life of Hart Crane, by *John Unterecker*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $15.00.**

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Voyager is a thesis-ridden biography that exposes the Real Hart Crane (as Leon Edel with James or Lawrance Thompson with Frost seem to believe they have done), merely that there is not enough doubleness or hesitation in Unterecker's presentation to necessitate his introductory and concluding appeals to our sympathy.

Though our sympathies he is surely entitled to for the ten years of labor that went into this book. Philip Horton's life of Crane, published in 1937, is still a readable, intelligent and shorter account, but Unterecker has interviewed so many of Crane's friends, inviting them to tell what happened down at Katharine Anne's or up at the Tates', that though it's still somebody's perspective on What Really Happened the perspectives are judicious and newly informative. As for himself, Unterecker plainly believes the biographer should not be eager to impose his own interpretation on events (he has already been praised for writing "objective" biography); yet it need hardly be said that the effort not to impose is itself a choice and means in this book not only that Crane is allowed to speak for himself but that his words are respected to the point of being tacitly endorsed and admired. If this is good behavior for a biographer—an arguable issue—it is not so good behavior for a critic; and in a book this thick the critic should have room to perform his task.[2]

Can there be room for criticism when there are all those letters to quote, parties to describe, brawls to check off? Who knows how much material was reluctantly not included in the finished text, how many pages of various drafts had eventually to be chucked? Large tracts of the book are devoted to Crane's off-again on-again relations with his father and to his long painfully loving one with Grace Hart Crane which ended for better or worse in permanent estrangement. Though the ins and outs of both relationships are carefully charted it becomes difficult after a time to care much when Hart gets mad at C. A., or C. A. advises Hart about Grace, or Grace unloads on C. A. via Hart. Thus things proceeded in their courses and thus the triangle was maintained; still it is a question whether the play-by-play is edifying or necessary. All one really needs, apart from a general outline, are one or two moments when Moms and Dads revealed their essential selves in a letter. Unterecker provides us with a fine instance of each revelation, first of Grace Crane after her divorce, writing to her mother from Coral Gables where she has gone real estating:

> There are men men men everywhere, young and old, and it has been my very good fortune to meet a number of very high type ones. One is connected with the Coral Gables outfit—very high type, and is from Cleveland and knows who I am and many of my

[2] Examples of thick biographies with intelligent, sometimes severe, criticism of the art as well as the life of their subjects are Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce* and Mark Schorer's *Sinclair Lewis.*

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> friends. He stands very close to the powers that be in Coral Gables, and is interested in getting me on the sales force in a high type plane . . .

The powers that be in Coral Gables: after a voice like this the Bethel Rock Festival was inevitable. The more Hart wanted to scream, as I presume he did, the closer he bound himself to Moms and the more necessary all those dreamy sailors became. As for Dads, he comes through most touchingly in his response to a letter Hart had written to him, locating and identifying the following passage from *The Bridge:*

> Behind
> My father's cannery works I used to see
> Rail-squatters ranged in nomad raillery,
> The ancient men—wifeless or runaway
> Hobo-trekkers that forever search
> An empire wilderness of freight and rails,
> Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,
> Holding to childhood like some termless play. . . .

To which C. A. replied:

> I received your letter the middle of last week, and the enclosure was, I believe, the best I have ever seen of your work. When I say the best it more nearly approached that low standard which I could understand. Something of this nature, in my humble opinion, would sell better than other things I have seen; it does not leave quite so much to the imagination.

I was grateful to Unterecker for providing me with this lovely moment, and, if I were he, would have praised C. A. Crane for some first rate literary criticism (it *is* marvelous poetry) as well as for modest candor—"that low standard which I can appreciate," but most of all for sticking to his guns in that salesman's final tip about the cash value of not leaving too much to the imagination.

The biographer's choice not to comment at such a moment might be defended as an admirable reluctance to shape our responses, to do the work for us. It is hard to admire this reluctance when he remains virtually silent about a long fascinating letter written by Crane to Yvor Winters in 1927. Provoked by, as Unterecker does say, Winters' insistence that major poetry could only be written by "complete" men, Crane fired back a reply which begins "You need a good drubbing for all your recent easy talk about 'the complete man,' the poet and his ethical place in society, etc." and proceeds to unfold a persuasive, revealing and clear-sighted defense of Hart Crane, poet and incomplete man. What makes the letter so appealing, along with the general intelligence of its analysis, is the genial passion with which the analysis is conducted: the use of "drubbing" at the outset

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to describe what Winters deserves, and what Crane will give him, has just the right combination of rough annoyance and humorous critical detachment to make the response civilized and large-spirited; also I suspect (though Winters' original letter is not quoted) to reveal Crane as a more complete man than his moral tutor. From its many interesting paragraphs here is one in which Crane questions the universality of this "complete man" notion:

> You don't seem to realize that the whole topic is something of a myth anyway, and is consequently modified in the characteristics of the image by each age in each civilization. Tom Jones, a character for whom I have the utmost affection, represented the model in 18th Century England, at least so far as the stated requirements of your letter would suggest, and for an Anglo-Saxon model he is still pretty good aside from calculus, the Darwinian theory, and a few other mental additions. Incidentally I think Tom Jones (Fielding himself of course) represents a much more "balanced" attitude toward society and life in general than our friend Thomas Hardy. Hardy's profundity is real, but it is voiced in pretty much one monotonous key. I think him perhaps the greatest technician in English verse since Shakespeare. . . . But you must be fanatic to feel that he fulfills the necessary "balanced ration" for modern consumption.

And he goes on to adduce Yeats as more likely than Hardy to create "a single joyous passion"—"anything like Falstaff." It's not surprising that Winters later confessed, after attacking the philosophy and much of the poetry of *The Bridge,* that he would nevertheless gladly emulate Odysseus "and go down to the shadows for another hour's conversation with Crane on the subject of poetry."

Did Crane spill out more of himself to the scrubwoman leaning on her mop than he did in this letter to Yvor Winters? I don't believe it, but do believe that a man's best utterances should be pressed hardest for what they may yield, and that the graceful play of Crane's intelligence deserves more attention than Unterecker's quick paraphrase of the latter, than his "objectively" quoting it without comment. Wasn't Crane really Tom Jones in America at the wrong time, lacking prudence and almost getting—it seemed for a time with Peggy Cowley —the right girl at the end? He was also the writer of the following imprudent limerick:

> Elizabeth Browning Barrett
> Was found by her maw in the garret
> Placing a dime in
> As far as her hymen
> And ramming it home with a carrot.

about which Unterecker says, cautiously, "Such limericks—part of

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Hart's considerable store for special occasions—were never offered for publication."

As regards Crane's major vices the biographer tells us that "Altogether too much . . . has been made of Crane's homosexuality." By whom, we want to ask? Since Crane himself was responsible for compulsively relating "detailed and often lurid anecdotes" to the friendly listener, Unterecker would play down the poet's abnormality by putting "normal" in quotation marks, then reminding us that "The normal man, if Kinsey's statistics are accurate, indulges in such a wide range of 'vices' that, in some way, Crane's affairs seem bland." In what way? When I hear fifteen pages later that when Crane lived briefly in Washington at age 21 he attended "orgiastic parties, wild evenings of intricate debauchery where, at first observing, he ended participating," but on the next page am assured that "The details . . . are unimportant," I feel suddenly turned off. For as a "normal" man, even after consulting my secret indulgence in a wide range of vices, I have evidently not heard the chimes at midnight: precious few wild evenings of intricate debauchery swim before the mind's eye (a consequence of living in Western Massachusetts? constitutional incapacity? strong moral code?) so that on the balance Hart Crane's erotic affairs don't seem bland at all, though admittedly a bit one-sided, while Unterecker merely sounds prim when he announces that for Crane "Sex was, as it is for most men, important." I'll say! Especially since *Voyager* is packed with moments when the fleet is suddenly in, ship ahoy: "The next day brought the icing on the angel food. A contingent of sailors from the U.S.S. Milwaukee reached town, carrying enough rescue food and drink to stock a day long party for all concerned. Hart had never found sailors so spectacularly available." What then does it mean to "make too much" of a man's homosexuality when, as is often the case in these pages, the man is ready to take on the whole U. S. Navy?

A similar pattern emerges in respect to Crane's drinking, with the insistence that he was not an alcoholic, or at least never a thoroughgoing "classic" alcoholic, played off against the details of many drunken bouts. So chapter 17 ends "The next evening—Crane's last in New York—was devoted to a gloriously drunken farewell party. . . ." Are there such things—gloriously drunken farewell parties? Whose imagination is imagining them? My feeling generally in pushing through this book was that Unterecker should have been harder on his man, less reverent before "Hart" whether in relation to his parents, his booze, his sailors, himself—less worried about whether he is getting down the "real" or "true" Crane and more committed to blocking out, in stronger more economical lines, what Crane's friend Sam Loveman referred to as a fine messed-up life. For it's clear to me, and I admit that through Unterecker's book I've seen it for the first time, how wild, tough and resiliently in the American grain was the poet who lazily regards us from somewhere out of

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those incredible eyes in the marvelous photographs that fill these pages.

What about the poems? Unterecker assures us that Crane "is acknowledged to be one of the greatest American poets of this century" and the passive voice may be a way of admitting that his own biography hasn't led us to new estimates or placings of the poems. Nor does Herbert Leibowitz's introductory study,[3] though it makes some sensible remarks about their syntax, diction and imagery. Leibowitz believes that "[Crane's] great poems are about himself"; yet it could be argued that knowing a lot about Crane's life in no way enables one to be a better reader of his poems, and there is the sense in which Milton's, Pope's, Wordsworth's, Yeats's great poems are about themselves. Nothing that happened to Crane can "explain" these four lines from "Faustus and Helen":

> Distinctly praise the years, whose volatile
> Blamed bleeding hands extend and thresh the height
> The imagination spans beyond despair,
> Outspacing bargain, vocable and prayer.

Nor does Leibowitz when he says that the passage "illustrates both the success and density of Crane's syntax. It announces the poet's creed: the imagination is capable, in its contemplation of beauty and truth, of transcending sufferings ("bleeding hands"), mendacities ("bargain"), conventional piety ("prayer"), and the stammerings of incomplete poems "vocable")." Should a reader ever be told this about lines as splendidly untranslatable as these? Surely A. Alvarez was right to point out, in connection with the same lines, an important truth of Crane's poetic appeal: that the rhythm of the verse was more precise and carried more weight than the meanings of the words. Leibowitz often says too much about the "meanings" ("vocable" equals "stammerings of incomplete poems") and does too little in the way of constructing the rhythmic voice of a poem through rhetorical analysis. Though it's doubtful that any kind of analysis could demonstrate a claim like the following: "Crane is a Romantic visionary, but this means that his visionary terror is real terror, just as his visionary ecstasy is real ecstasy."

The main difficulty in criticizing Crane's poetry is that it doesn't present much interesting variety of tone, nor is the fineness of individual lines or passages usually dependent on their occurring at a certain dramatic moment in the poem. Consider the following anthology of favorite moments in Crane:

> I could never remember
> That seething, steady leveling of the marshes
> Till age had brought me to the sea.

[3] HART CRANE: An Introduction to the Poetry, by *Herbert A. Leibowitz.* Columbia University Press. $7.50.

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or:

> Scatter these well-meant idioms
> Into the smoky spring that fills
> The suburbs . . .

or all sorts of things from "Voyages," or a single line—"Dark waters onward shake the dark prow free," or an exclamation—"The apples, Bill, the apples!," or Yvor Winters' favorite—"I could not pick the arrows from my side"—or any moment in the marvelous conclusion to "The River":

> The River, spreading, flows—and spends your dream.
> What are you, lost within this tideless spell?
> You are your father's father, and the stream—
> A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.
>
> Deep tonnage and alluvial march of days—
> Nights turbid, vascular with silted shale . . .

One doesn't want to stop, and Kenneth Burke may be right when he speaks of the appropriateness of reading Crane along with a modicum of alcohol. I hope it is not obscurantist to claim that both Leibowitz and Unterecker, preoccupied as they are with examining the poem or the life, don't do enough "analysis" in the sense Leavis used it years ago (in his essay "Literary Studies") of taking possession of the poem (or the life), and making it be *there* by a constructive and creative act that is also a personal one. In the case of Crane's poetry it would involve making more of the problematic nature of various rhetorical effects by bringing into play the hesitations, uncertainties, exhilarations a reader feels in the presence of these effects. And will continue to feel about them unless they are ironed out by exegetical commentary. The result would be a less orderly book than either of these two solemnly industrious ones, but perhaps more playful and risky in its attempt to get at Crane's elegant impenetrability:

> The imaged Word, it is, that holds
> Hushed willows anchored in its glow.
> It is the unbetrayable reply
> Whose accent no farewell can know.

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GEORGE STADE

Desportment

"ATHLETES ARE EXCELLENCE in the guise of men," says Paul Weiss. They define themselves by a dedication to the project of achieving perfection "in and through their bodies." They enter contests in order to discover what they are by what they do, and thereby to reveal "what man as such can be and do"—so far as man is a body moving in accordance with the "vectoral thrust" of his mind. And because, as he plays, the athlete assumes a representative role, he "makes all of us vicariously completed men." The excellence he embodies is the form of our humanity perfected in action.

With such assertions *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry*[1] opens. And they are promising enough in their fusion of classical and existential assumptions for the reader to want to see what Weiss will do with them. We are presently told that the rest of the book, another two hundred pages or so, will make the promise good. But it does no such thing.

It moves instead through a series of distinctions among related forms, as might an argument by an ordinary language philosopher, except that Weiss's distinctions do not correspond very well with those of common usage and do not make anything very distinct, least of all sport. When we have finished reading J. L. Austin's essay on excuses, say, we feel both envigorated and relaxed; our minds are sharp, clear, ready to perform with dispatch and precision. A conceptual blur has been brought into focus, dissected, and its components labeled for future reference. The words *excuse, justification, extenuation* become rich and grave with the generations of human experience that went into their making; they hop with energy amidst the forces that hold them together and keep them apart. But Weiss's distinctions numb the brain, chill the heart, and irritate the sensorium; reading them is like listening to a man play your favorite piece on the clarinet, a quarter-tone off on each important note, or like watching a painter with much schooling and no talent do a portrait of your mistress.

Athletes are attentive, says Weiss. *Attention* "involves a focusing on a future prospect and an elicitation of acts, usually bodily acts." Without the elicited acts, there is only *alertness,* but not attention. If there is attention and *desire* the "elicited" acts are "relevant to the realization of the prospect focused on." *Wish* differs from desire in that it does not involve acts "relevant to the realization. . . ." etc. *Intention* assures that the acts "are relevant not only to the desired prospect but

[1] SPORT: A PHILSOPHICAL INQUIRY, by *Paul Weiss.* Southern Illinois University Press. $7.50.

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to oneself"; in intending, "one reads into a prospect something of himself." *Commitment* guarantees that one will not give up a long-range project even while he is busy with immediate intentions. Above all, "it is the *dedication* of the athlete that marks him off most conspicuously from those who have the same commitments, intentions, desires, objects of attention, and inclinations." The dedicated athlete "adds a self-determination by which he supports that which he aims at with inclinations in that direction."

And so we go, through strategy and tactics; to practical judgment, common sense, wisdom, skill, habit; to decisiveness, will, control, mastery; flexibility, suppleness, relaxation; skill, gracefulness, accuracy, correctness; chance, luck, good fortune ("Good fortune is a steady run of luck"); and many others. The pages on equipment are as brain-softening as the others, but at least have a certain charm:

> A boxing glove in the store is not yet equipment; if it is torn, without stuffing, it is no longer to be used in a match; if made for a man, it is not equipment for a normal child; if designed for the training camp, it is not usually suitable for the ring. Equipment not used is equipment capable of being used only if it is available, in working order, and suitable to the individual and the situation.

None of this is false, exactly; nor is it exactly true, either; it is simply not to the point. *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry* is both internally consistent and systematically wrong, as are an endless number of books by philosophers on art, sociologists on movies, behaviorists on emotion, theologians on love, and Marxists on the poor, and for the same reasons: there is a relentless conceptual machine, a repertoire of all-purpose abstractions, intellect a-plenty; but also an atrophied intelligence, a flight from the observable, a casting-out of common-sense, an absence of first-hand experience. "I am not an athlete," are the first words of this book, and the sequel goes on to prove them.

A philosophical inquiry into sports has yet to be written, then, and we are entitled to feel annoyance with Weiss to the extent that we had hoped his book would be it. The real thing, I should think, would have to begin by pointing out that what we call sports form among themselves a disjunctive category, one in which there is not a set of shared features, no common denominator, among the items in the category, but only "similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that," to quote Wittgenstein on games; "we see a whole network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail"—family resemblances, in short, but no one feature common to them all. Sports A and B may have a dozen things in common, and sport C may have a half-dozen things in common each with A and with B, but not have any of the things in common with A that it has in common with B. And it is

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doubtful that fishing, say, has as much in common with football as it has with many activities not usually considered sports, as it is doubtful that fishing "means" the same to all the men who regularly hunt fish. It might turn out to be more profitable to characterize as sports not certain activities, but any activity performed in a certain "spirit," in a certain frame of mind.

A proper inquiry would also have to take into account that any particular sport is over-determined, is as it is because it came into being in this or that historical circumstance; because it is maintained by this or that national life-style; because it satisfies this or that psychological need; because it is an expression of this or that disposition programmed into our genetic structures; because the pelvis and muscle fibre of women are different from those of men; because of all these at once. A man who took such matters into account might be able to explain why football is becoming more popular than baseball, why baseball was once so popular, why baseball is transportable, although football is not, what the rest of the world sees in soccer. He might then proceed to the proper business of philosophy, which is to conceptualize experience, to turn what is lived into what can be thought. And if he had either experience as an athlete, a gift for observation, or a sympathetic imagination, he might be able to give us a phenomenology of sport—which would be something worth having.

My guess is that such an inquiry would come to rest in a conceptual area adjoining the one blocked out by Weiss's opening and concluding remarks on the relations between athletics and excellence. For the Greeks, excellence, *areté*, denoted a perfect fit between a thing's achievement and its *telos* or generic end, a realization of its *raison d'être* without overlap or insufficiency. It could describe the cutting of a knife, the swoop of an eagle, the mettle of a horse. But among humans, to have *areté* was in a very special sense to excel; it was achieved only through increasing strife for supremacy, through fierce and relentless *agon*, conflict, through unremitting competition. For to be entirely a human was to engage in a struggle to be more than one. Above are "the immortals," the gods, personifications of energies that survive beyond the seasons and the individual men who from time to time embody them. Below lies nature, also immortal in that it is reborn yearly, in that the unit is the enduring species, rather than the perishing individual. Between are "the mortals," individual men who die. Their condition is unstable; unless they achieve god-like immortality they sink back into the anonymity of nature.

In the flesh, of course, men fail; they die; their condition is tragic; unlike gods, no man is omnipotent or omniscient. But to test the limits of human knowledge and power, to excel, to become through conflict the best among men, is the only way to leave an imperishable trace, to achieve immortality, to detach one's *areté* from the dying animal, to be properly a man. It was in honor of the immortal *areté* of dead

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heroes and warriors that the Greeks built their shrines and poured their libations, as it was to honor the *areté* of athletes that Pindar wrote his odes.

Only to the extent that he was honored could a man know that he had achieved excellence; his honor was the reflection of his *areté* in the eyes of his peers. "Men seem to pursue honor in order to assure themselves of their worth—their *areté*. . . . For honor is the prize of *areté*," said Aristotle. I confess to believing that this view of the task of being human, if stated in an up-to-date idiom and laced with an ironic awareness of its convenience to aristocratic self-congratulation, its naive reliance on the ability of humans to recognize excellence or to honor it once they have recognized it, is still a pretty good one. It at least has the look of explaining much about soldiers and athletes—not to mention Mafiosi Sicilians, coup-counting primitive hunters, teenage gangs, all of whom seem ready to risk everything for honor.

"The skill and strength of a warrior or an athlete," then, adds Werner Jaeger, is what the Greeks meant most of all by *areté*. The honor a Greek won through excellence was the shape of his visibility as an individual while he lived and the measure of what would survive in him when he died. But the honor awarded athletes was not, and is not, the same as that awareded to men who achieve excellence in warfare, or, for that matter, in statesmanship or science or playwriting. Athletes play games; and although games, as schoolmasters used to say, are a preparation for war, they are not the thing itself.

The victories won in games are neither ambiguous nor Pyhrric; history cannot turn them into defeats. Defeat itself is redeemable. The players know in advance the rewards of victory and the penalties of defeat; these are not inevitably transformed by the course of the struggle. There are rules; they are known; there are referees to enforce them; there are penalties for those who do not play fair. A game has neither a past in what caused it, nor a future in its effects. One's opponents are entirely visible and of one's own kind. The field of endeavor is circumscribed by visible and inerrant boundaries. The players need not fear falling into a hidden dimension. They can be confident that training will be of use, will not hamper them with propensities in the wrong direction, that skill, strength, courage, and dedication will give one an advantage, that the best man will win. Above all, they can count on being seen, at least by their opponents; they can rely on their efforts being recognized and their achievements acclaimed. They can feel the bracing presence of an audience that has come for the express purpose of watching them do what makes them all they are; even in defeat they need never feel the special despair that haunts those who struggle for self-determination out of sight and out of mind. These traits of games separate the playing-field from the other arenas in which men pursue honor. No matter how much life is a game, games only mime life.

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Athletes, in short, win their excellence in a controlled environment, one that is artificial in the way of laboratories, plays, rituals. The risks they run are of a different kind from those run by men who try to domesticate nature by thought or action, or who assume the responsibilities of leading and misleading other men, or who in sounds or words or paint struggle to fix in a memorable form the shapes of human experience. We honor our athletes with shares in soft drink empires and fried chicken chains, with appearances on television commericals and gab-fests, with harems of airline stewardesses; the Greeks did much the same. But no tragic poet celebrates their excellence. No Herodotus writes in their honor. The folk mind of no culture immortalizes them in legend. Once a great athlete's own contemporaries have died, his achievements survive only as bare entries in a record book.

PAUL ZWEIG

Michel Butor And The New Enlightenment

THE *Encyclopédie*—courageous and boring—survives in the French intellect like an ideal form: a reverence for the virtues of "method" and "system,"—more recently, "structure"—which somehow is destined always to be renewed, always disappointed. The principle of this episodic Enlightenment, which returns like a special season in French culture, is simple: whatever resists the enterprise of "method" and "system" has no true claim to the respect of knowledgeable men. Thus Michel Butor, while admiring Balzac's encyclopedic appetite in *La Comédie Humaine,* can only regret that the novelist was not tidier in his enterprise, more alphabetical perhaps, like the *Encyclopédie* itself, or like Butor's own claim to "method" and "system," *Mobile,* the chapter headings of which are arranged in alphabetical order.

Butor is an important figure in the new Enlightenment (as I am tempted to call it) which has dominated French literature and philosophy since the late 1950's. Along with the structuralists, the *nouvelle critique,* the *nouveaux romanciers,* he speaks eloquently, in his essay on "The Space of the Novel," for a culture whose motto would not have disappointed the *philosophes,* or their systematic successor

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Auguste Comte: "What was hitherto empirical must simply become methodical" (*Inventory*, p. 31). With this statement of intention, Butor undertakes the studies which compose *Répertoire I, II, Figures*, etc., a selection of which Richard Howard presents to us in the volume entitled *Inventory*.[1]

Butor prizes method and structure highly indeed. He is fascinated by an "architecture" of human connections, as if the world of meanings which he, as critic, intended to explore were somehow inscribed in a kind of geography, a space entirely open to the efforts of classification and self-consciousness. Like other new Enlightenment critics (I am thinking of Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean-Pierre Richard, to mention a mixed few), Butor has developed a variety of spatial metaphors to express his faith in the procedures of "elucidation." We read, therefore, about the "space of the novel"; we are told, in an astute insight, that "the sole but significant superiority . . . of all writing . . . is the simultaneous exposure to our eyes of what our ears can grasp only sequentially." The special virtue of books, in particular, is to allow "the reader a great freedom of movement in relation to the 'unrolling' of the text, a great mobility which most nearly approximates a simultaneous presentation of all parts of a work."

Time, and the language of temporality, are villains in Butor's methodical house. The art of good literature, as he explains it, is to free us from the restrictions of mere "chronology," through the use of a repertoire of tricks: "Parallelisms, reversals, recurrences," "flashbacks," until, at the height of narrative freedom, "Each event appears as though it could be the point of origin and of convergence of several narrative sequences. . . . Narration is no longer a line, but a surface on which we isolate a certain number of points, of remarkable groupings" (p. 19). For Butor, the genius of narrative—and of the novel as its most sophisticated genre—is to convert time into space, sequence into simultaneity; and, I might add, experience, with its burden of recalcitrance and disorder, into structure.

The range of Butor's critical appetite is impressive. The selection presented to us in *Inventory* includes essays on novelistic theory, on such figures in French literature as Chateaubriand, Balzac, Proust, Apollinaire, on an author as improbable as Jules Verne, on fairy-tales, science fiction, music, painting, travel. As Mr. Howard points out in his foreword to the volume, Butor intends his essays to take their place in a larger enterprise which includes his novels and experimental texts as well. The variety of subjects, therefore, is not haphazard. It is consistent with Butor's method, whose aim, it would seem, is to gauge the part played by "space" and "simultaneity" in the world of human (for the most part literary) expressiveness.

[1] INVENTORY, by *Michel Butor*. Simon & Schuster. $7.95.

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In his interesting study of Balzac, for example, Butor describes how the *Comédie Humaine,* through a system of repetitions and connections proceeding backward and forward between the various stories, forms a novelistic whole with no beginning or end:

> The result is what one might call a novelistic mobile, a whole formed by a certain number of parts which we can approach in almost any order we please; each reader will follow a different trajectory through the universe of the *Comédie Humaine;* it is like a sphere or an enclosure with many entrances (p. 104).

Balzac's crude, abundant genius was able to unlock the chains of "simple chronology," creating thereby a world most aptly characterized by the language of architecture. The limits of Butor's critical method are apparent, however, in the passage where he, paradoxically, compares the anthill of Balzac's *Comédie* to one of the great monuments of icy fantasy in French literature; Butor writes: "The 'Book' Mallarmé dreamed of in the order of lyric poetry, Balzac had already prodigiously exemplified in the order of the novel" (p. 105). Surely it is perverse to weigh the accomplishment of Balzac on such a scale. Mallarmé's longing for a cosmic-literary architecture was so single-minded that the merest hint of movement and sequence (as they were embodied, for example, in the frail act of setting pen to paper, conceiving words in the mode of poor humanity, one after another) discouraged him. The Book, *"Le Livre,"* could exist, for Mallarmé, only to the extent that he, its author, argued for its truth by preserving its pure spatiality, i.e.: by not writing it. It is no surprise, therefore, that *"Le Livre"* remained a dream, never accomplished. Balzac, on the contrary, was hungry for the work of life. If he unbinds the "simple" connections of chronology, it is because his *Comédie* is designed to imitate the broad, disorderly, but nonetheless interconnected tableau of France at a moment in history, of humanity as seen through the wide lens of France in the Nineteenth Century. Space does not replace chronology, for Balzac; architecture does not resolve the yeast of change, despite Butor's insistence. Rather the space of the *Comédie* becomes a field of chronologies. Time, slowing, broadening, becomes a garden of times, each one unfolding, decaying, presenting its burden of unresolvable darkness amidst the larger shape of the human comedy. The richness of Balzac's *Comédie* lies in the struggle between space and time (to use Butor's categories). If he had been more thorough, like Mallarmé, or like Butor himself in *Mobile,* he would have given us a world in which the merely human had been drained away: a house not lived in, perhaps not made to be lived in.

Butor's fascination with lists, catalogues, enumerations turns out to be quite in line with his methodical rooting out of sequence and

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chronology. He quotes with approval Apollinaire's article on Picasso, written in 1913:

> A new man, the world is his representation. He enumerates the elements, its details, with a brutality which can also be graceful. He is a newborn babe who puts order into the universe for his own use and also in order to facilitate his relations with his own kind. This enumeration has the greatness of the epic, and with order explodes the drama. We may contest a system, an idea, a date, a resemblance, but I do not see how we can contest the simple action of the enumerator (p. 206).

Here, for Butor, lies the prophecy of a new art; not only Picasso's, but the art of the *nouveau roman,* of Natalie Sarraute, Robbe-Grillet, Butor himself; an art that glories in the freedom of meticulous, unspoiled enumeration. And what is this freedom? It consists in the possibility of doing with the very shape of language what Balzac, according to Butor, attempted as he worked out his network of novels and stories; what Apollinaire dreamed of when he broke up the linear structure of words on the page in *Calligrammes,* creating "wholes which can be traversed in all directions," "more or less spreading his poem out before our eyes" (p. 207). Enumeration is a way of spreading the book out before our eyes. In a list, especially if it is random or alphabetical, succession, purified of all special meanings, becomes nil; grammar and sequence fade into signals of the lowest possible value. If the art of the *nouveau roman,* as Butor defines it here, is to spatialize language (and perception), then the list or enumeration is its purest form.

I cannot help but perceive a difference between the ancestors Butor singles out (Rabelais, Balzac, Proust, Apollinaire) and the methodical principles he argues for. It is as if the impulsive appetite of a Balzac or a Rabelais had been perfected in Butor's hands ("what was hitherto empirical must simply become methodical") with a kind of bureaucratic thoroughness. Butor, it would seem, enumerates not from exuberance (Rabelais) or traditional pride (Homer), but rather from a brittle impulse to organize, even if the organizing is merely a boxing in of chaos. In a world of pure space, alphabetical order works quite as well as any merely hungry human order.

Inventory is, finally, not a satisfying book. Despite Butor's brilliance and his vast curiosity, the essays rarely justify themselves. All too often, they lack the sharpness of good argument, failing, as a result, to convince us that they are needed for new. The essay on Chateaubriand, for example, is cumbersome and ungraceful; Butor's interrogation of quotes has an almost embarrassed professorial quality, interlarded with flagrantly conventional interpretations of literary history. Despite moments of fine insight, the essay has a curiously aca-

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demic ring. Here as elsewhere, Butor's apparent thoroughness is his worst enemy. For the drawback of so many of the essays is their abortive Encyclopedic quality, giving a feel of dull generality to insights that could be dramatic if only they didn't plod from point to point, from book to book, like overburdened prefaces to "The Complete Works Of . . ." (all of Jules Verne, the entire *Comédie Humaine,* the life work of Mondrian, etc.).

One wonders whether Butor's failure to achieve a rhythm of personal argument in the essays is not somehow connected with his thoroughgoing preference for the "spatial" qualities of literature and language. An argument is, after all, belligerently unspatial. It depends upon the proper sequence of its elements, on "timing," and speed, as well as on clarity. Robbe-Grillet, faced with a similar problem, chose more than once to rely on a plot (an argument) which was pure form: the detective story. Is it not possible that Butor, perhaps not intentionally, has also fallen into an argumentation which is pure form: that of the academic, *"Sorbonnard"* tradition?

To be sure, there are redeeming moments, as in some of the theoretical essays which open *Inventory,* in the concluding sections of the essay on Jules Verne, in the intriguing pages dealing with Mondrian. But the overall effect is disappointing, an impression which, unfortunately, is strengthened by a certain ponderousness in many of the translations.

The lesson of *Inventory* is, nonetheless, an important one. For the book's failures are much in the image of its intellectual choices. Butor's vision of liberation as a kind of luminous paralysis, a freedom from "time" and the oppressive conventions of temporality, can, when it is pursued too relentlessly (in the interest of comprehensive "structure" and "system") become itself a prison. And prisons are notoriously marked by their conservative routines and their boredom.

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BERT O. STATES

On Re-printing Oneself: or, The Third Brustein

IN THE THRALL OF ITS TONE perhaps, I set out to discuss this book[1] the way Robert Brustein himself might discuss it had someone else written it—someone who lurks in his estimation at roughly the level of a Helen Hayes, a Giraudoux, an Ellis Rabb, an Edward Albee, or a Walter Kerr. That is: pointing out how it had failed to serve art and culture—which the theatre (and books about the theatre) always should: ". . . how can one love the theatre unless it functions as the instrument of some higher purpose?" (p. 159)—and could have, had the author written it another way. It is a great temptation to treat a book, or a play, in a religious way, as if the author were abusing the sacred, and ought to be scolded, like an heretic child, put back on the right path, and expected to know better next time out. But being more cynical, I am afraid all that will linger here of the Brustein flavor is the unfriendliness that characterizes reviewers who become irritated, then angry, then satirical, and finally maybe even giddy, toward the books or the plays they review. More than any other servant of the arts, it is the American theatre reviewer who has taught us to go, without mercy, for the vital parts, in the same way (and at much the same anonymous distance from target) that one bombs the Enemy in war. I couldn't possibly say these things to Mr. Brustein's face (I hear he is a very nice man too)—I just haven't the guts. I hide here behind 1) the safety of printed symbols, 2) the weak notion that his own angry crusade against sham and fakery—not that his book is either—gives me the right to react in kind, and 3) that dirty reviewing is not really hurting anyone anyway—it's belletristic, not bellicose. It's like dirty politics: nothing personal.

In Brustein's case, the vital part is the head. His heart is in all the right places: higher purposes, discipline, imagination, sensible experimentation, artistic control, British acting, articulation, relevance in the production, vitality and joy, genuine excitement, conviction, originality. And it is against "whatever is pernicious in the culture" (p. 201)—which would include American tyranny, Broadway, "jollying up Shakespeare," masterpiece-ism, fake innovation, the "new barbarism," "a theatre of liberated arrogant amateurs," Vietnam, Madison Avenue villainy, mass culture, inarticulate heroes, and then a whole crowd of people who are not really pernicious in themselves but are selling out to one or another of these pernicious

[1] THE THIRD THEATRE, by *Robert Brustein*. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

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things: Edward Albee, William Inge, Murray Schisgal, Neal Simon, David Merrick, Marlon Brando, Mitch Miller, Arthur Miller, David Susskind, Alistair Cooke, Groucho Marx, and almost anyone in the media.

I honestly admire Brustein as a critic of the drama far more than most others I can name, and it would be nice to be reviewing him here as a critic rather than as a collector. There aren't many recent essays as good as a number of those in *The Theatre of Revolt* (the one on Chekhov being, in my opinion, one of the best things on Chekhov in English). And a few of the longer pieces in this collection are, I think, superior as cultural journalism—"Reflections on Horror Movies," "A Comedy of Disaster" (on *Dr. Strangelove*), and a short memoir called "Boris and The Second Avenue Muse." These, plus a few of the reviews, are the ones I liked best. In fact, my feeling is that there are really two Robert Brusteins: the one who writes well, cleanly and unmodishly, about things he likes (especially classics of the drama), and the one who writes—though not always—with a visible edge of self-righteousness, over-cruelty, and simplistic idealism, about things he doesn't like and wants to change.

I want mostly to question his judgment in re-printing most of the pieces in this volume, which are gleaned out of *New Republic* and elsewhere between 1957 and 1968. A very gentle preface (which almost makes me ashamed to go on) says that there is frankly not much that ties these essays together but that their author hopes they will have "sufficient relevance to be worth preserving in book form." There's my quarrel: I don't think they're that good or that relevant, and I don't think their re-publication, based on Brustein's own preoccupation with cultural standards, was a thing of very high purpose, though in perfectly good conscience it may be defended as a thing of somewhat slighter purpose (being, of course, a whole third book and hopefully successful). They are better reviews than most, that's all. Easy to read, on top of things, etc. There are possibly a few mistakes (*Macbird*?), but mistakes don't matter much in reviewing. It's all in whether it's interesting to read, as Mary McCarthy once said. Here, I am only reminded of how old yesterday's theatre news is. Brustein, it seems to me, is reviewing's counterpart of the American playwright on the "intellectual" side opposite Walter Kerr, and the American playwright, though not a bad sort, has not produced much that is worth seeing five or ten years later. But, when you stop and think about it, there's really nothing wrong in that, in our not living in a Golden Age of drama. We ought to stop and think about that more often, I think.

What an easy victim the American theatre is though. To rip into Edward Albee or William Inge the way Brustein does, this natural lucidity honed to razor-edge on thousands of assignments in the theatres of San Francisco and London and Berlin and Paris and Greece, it's like pulling the plug on someone's iron lung. Why, for

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example, should Brustein's savage review of Inge's *Where's Daddy?* be exhumed for our re-scorn? What good does it do the theatre? Is it really an important part of the cultural record, or is it just a part of the reviewer's ego? ("Remember how I creamed Inge in '66?") And why does Brustein regret in "Waiting for Hamlet" that young Tom Stoppard, who is better than most others trying to write good plays today, *isn't* Samuel Beckett, or that *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* isn't as good as *Hamlet*?

Then other things: for example, the title essay on "The Third Theatre" is way out of date. It has no interest as history because it is simply Brustein's hopeful interpretation of what might have been going to happen in the early '60s, a hope he has already renounced in his introduction. *Dynamite Tonight, Vietrock,* and *Macbird* are about as dead as *Caste* and *Mrs. Ebbsmith* and it isn't at all interesting to hear about them again. Most of these reviews, like the Inge, turn out to be Brustein's stuffed trophies, all shot from the hip in the jungles around Broadway. Finally, it is really hard to see why Brustein should want us to read again his 1957 essay on "America's New Cultural Hero," which is almost convulsively (like Strangelove's mechanical hand) bent on demolishing the stupid, ignorant, inarticulate Dean-Brando hero who flourishes, for some reason I honestly believe Brustein is unable to understand, "at a time when America has the largest middle-class population in the world" (p. 208). That's really sticking to your guns.

This self-anthologizing mania is becoming, as Brustein might say, a serious danger. Pretty soon news columnists are going to get onto the idea of collecting their columns into books on the theory that we ought to have the past, their version of it, right at hand. I wonder if it isn't a subtle form of the same Madison Avenue villainy that Brustein wrote ominously about in 1961 and has re-printed here as his most sustained polemic on American cheapness and anti-intellectuality. In this essay, Brustein laments such things as that the book clubs are offering low-standard selections, "forced to seek a wider membership," and movies and TV shows are written to formula. Mass-magazine articles are "either pure hackwork or an embarrassment to the writer." The panel shows are dominated by "soupy-minded moderators or long-winded guest 'personalities,'" and—oh, everything is (was) just getting crass. Everything. And the Madison Avenue Villain, who replaced the old Wall Street Robber Baron, turns out to be not the "source of this spiritual famine, but merely its agent—in a special sense, its victim" (p. 202). The solution to this problem comes very close to being the master Brustein solution for all our problems:

> What can we do in the face of these conditions, which now seem so fixed and irremediable? Here one runs the risk of sounding visionary, or, what is worse, impudent and hortatory, for we are so far from solutions that even a beginning requires a tremendous

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> effort of the moral will. As an immediate objective, one might work toward restoring the lost values of the intellectual community—honor, dignity, integrity—by returning to the traditional intellectual attitudes of alienation and dissent. If this means the isolation of thought in places where thought is still free (the academy, the little magazine, the scholarly journal, and listener-supported FM radio), then this is still more honorable, if less profitable, than that "worldliness" where the intellectual is tempted to soften or suppress what he knows for the sake of an expanded pocketbook; and, at least, we will no longer be giving our sanction to the mutilation of culture. (pp. 202-203)

It is hard to know exactly what he means by these traditional intellectual attitudes of alienation and dissent, or by "the isolation of thought in places where thought is still free," or why the intellectual community should have such a corner on honor, dignity, and integrity. I think I get the idea. But can you really haul attitudes and states of mind around like this—I mean, in an "immediate" way? In any way, in fact, except on paper? How can you isolate thought? What's the first step you would take, for instance? It sounds like a way-out way of getting rid of M.A.V. But let me draw a connection between this paragraph and a true-life adventure it reminds me of. For example: did we ever get back to an untraditional and unintellectual variety of alienation and dissent at Cornell in the spring of this year. I recall a Leader addressing a crowd of over twelve thousand at a highly critical moment in our dissent, and saying—as the immediate solution to a tension that was a good bit like watching a lit fuse get shorter and shorter—that we must all be men of good will. We were all there for high purposes and mustn't let Violence, or Polarization, or Inhumanity destory our Dignity, Honor, or Integrity.

What these words amounted to, what made their own honest and dedicated good will completely impotent—in fact, turned them into *bad* will!—was, I think, a distant form of this same villainy, the villainy, as Brustein says, of a system that was unwittingly converting "the objects of the intellect into commodities which can be sold across the counter like a bar of soap" (p. 199). Now ours, of course, wasn't as far along, but it does occur to me that there is a clear link between Madison Avenue and the position of this man who was, frankly, stuck in a high place with thousands of different kinds of internal and external consumers demanding different kinds of products, you might say, and forced to approach this incredibly impassioned, immanently explosive scene with an umbrella of "genuine concern." We had, right there, the phenomenon of the man who was for all the right things, might even have laid down his life for them, but couldn't manage to illustrate by the example of his own utterance that they were possible to achieve. Madison Avenue had killed us dead, then and there. And I think you need genius to avoid Madison Avenue.

Understand that my point is not that this Leader or that Mr.

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Brustein (by analogy) are villainous, or to blame, any more than anybody else is. But this kind of complex and paradoxical evil-good is what Brustein doesn't realize he is writing about in the essay on Madison Avenue. He has only the popular chunk of the villainy. And this is what makes the essay the best symptom of that second Brustein I mentioned whose idealism and intolerance with mediocrity cause him to interpret life more simply than I am afraid we are doomed to live it under these crowded conditions. This is also what makes it so hard to overlook this book as another anthology—its serious concern for our health. But I think a serious man taking up such a serious problem wouldn't draw his hands into a thoughtful cathedral, look off into the distance of "alternatives" available to our mutilated and mutilating culture, and give us such suggestions for solutions as the isolation of thought or the restoration of the lost values of the intellectual community. Even in 1961, he would have seen that the Madison Avenue Villain isn't an object apart from Higher Purpose and Good Will, an enemy to be destroyed before "truth and art" are completely "on the market block, everyone in a gray flannel suit" (p. 203). To get back to our idiom, he'd see the theme that comedy and tragedy have preached for 2500 years: that the thing was perhaps *in him* too, not out there, not something to be objectified in this broad prose of genuine concern which dribbles out of the mouths of politicians and has the instant effect of showing you just how deeply infected everything is by the villainy. Imagine Swift facing the problem of the British Landlord Villain with such language.

The miraculous thing about M.A.V. is that he swallows his victims whole, alive and kicking, and then he incorporates their very struggle of opposition into a special form of his own strength. So, miracle of miracles, it falls out that an essay like "Madison Avenue Villain" is, in a special sense, written *on* Madison Avenue. It unwittingly imitates a society which is in love with the sound of indignation and with a concern for the real thing, would perhaps even honestly like to have the real thing. But it can't, absolutely can't have it, because it is not sure what the real thing is and it is making so much of its living off the sound and the concern. Being so big and so profuse, it has had to imitate itself to insure its own survival—the process I think anthropologists call culture—and this involves doing such ugly and profitable things as making mistakes and reproductions—fakes, if you like—so there are enough products to suit the demand. Symbolically speaking, it has had to re-print itself, endlessly and indiscriminately, just because Man abhors an unused possibility as much as Nature abhors a vacuum. And then, finally, it has to hire people to assess this old-new product, in the name of higher purpose, and, as part of the assessment, reprint parts of it still a third and a fourth time so that we can see, being genuinely concerned, where it has succeeded in advancing us and where it has failed. In all of this I am sure there is both honor and villainy, but I am not sure just which is which.

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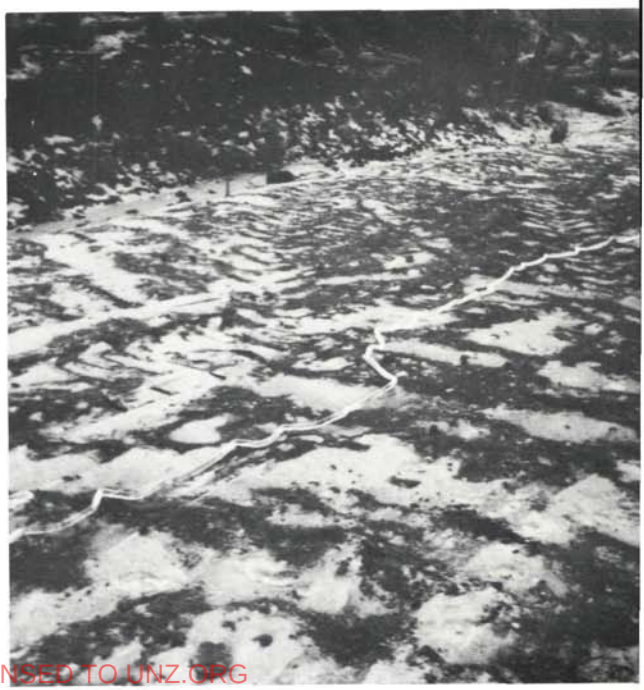

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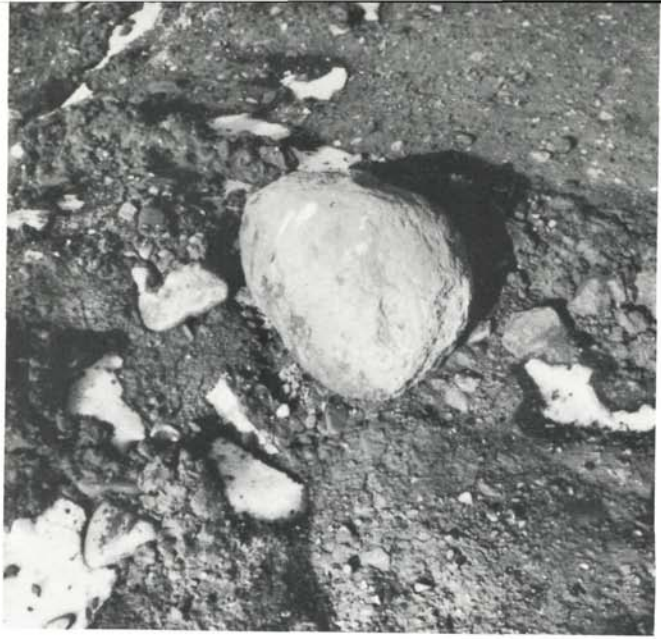

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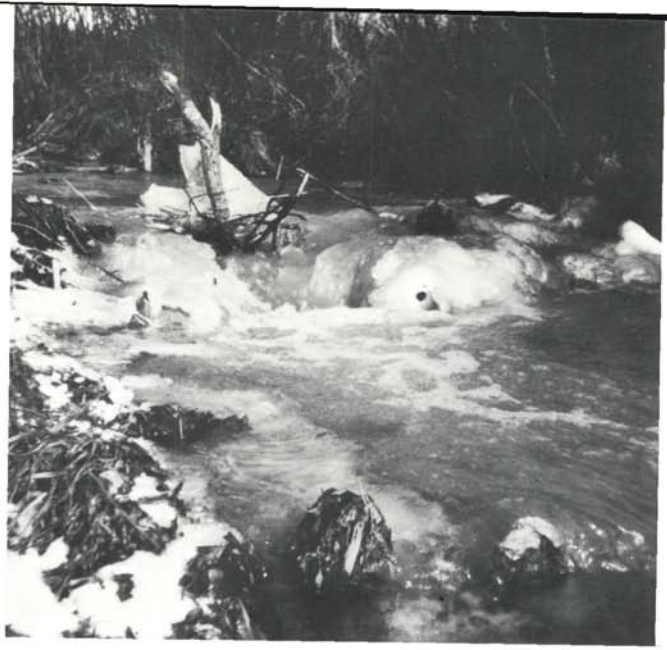

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